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**“WHEN THE BIBLE MEETS THE BLACK STUFF: A CONTEXTUAL BIBLE STUDY
EXPERIMENT”**

**A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

BY TIFFANY WEBSTER 120213511

06 March, 2017

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ABSTRACT

The original contribution to knowledge that this Biblical Studies research project offers is the experimental analysis of the claim that the Bible reading methodology *Contextual Bible Study* (CBS) should be grounded in ethnography, not only in practice, but also in writing.

This project not only critically evaluates this argument, but it also demonstrates the efficacy of its claims by putting the argument presented into practice. This was done by implementing the suggested methodological refinements of CBS via the design and facilitation of a CBS programme that was grounded in ethnography. This took the form of ethnographically researching coal-mining culture in South Derbyshire and conducting a CBS programme with a group of contemporary South Derbyshire coal miners.

The findings of this project are significant for the discipline of Biblical Studies as thus far CBS has been used in a manner that fails to recognise the need for ethnographic contextualisation – a need which is twofold. First, it has yet to be widely acknowledged that the processes, methods, and goals of CBS are products of the context that gave birth to it (South Africa) and that in order for CBS to be used appropriately and effectively, it should be contextualised in light of its origins. Secondly, ethnographic contextualisation is also needed to ensure the following: that the researcher using CBS understands as fully as possible the context in which they intend to use CBS; that the CBS programme being developed resonates deeply with those participating in it; and that the final audience of any readings produced via CBS are equally knowledgeable about the context of those participating in the process.

This thesis therefore examines critically both ethnography and CBS, and through the employment of reflexivity, incorporates ethnography into CBS not only as its formal prerequisite stage, but in a manner whereby its results are then used to shape and inform the entirety of the CBS research.

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CHAPTER ONE. INTRODUCTION

Research Aims

The focus of this research project was to investigate critically the Contextual Bible Study¹ methodology and to ascertain whether ethnography² should be formally incorporated into the existing CBS methodology as the necessary prerequisite stage of CBS programmes.³ To demonstrate the soundness of this proposal, I then put my methodological amendments into action by constructing an ethnographically grounded CBS programme. As a result of this, my research project also records and analyses how a group of “ordinary”⁴ readers, in this case a group of South Derbyshire coal miners, contextually read a series of biblical texts. Both my methodological refinement of CBS and the coal miners’ contextual biblical interpretations should therefore be considered as this research project’s original contribution to the discipline of Biblical Studies.

¹ “Contextual Bible Study” will be abbreviated to “CBS” and a detailed explanation of this exegetical process will be provided in chapter five.

² The notion of ethnography will be examined at length in chapter three, alongside a description of how this understanding aligned with my ontological and epistemological positions.

³ How I determined CBS’ need for ethnography will be examined in depth in chapter three.

⁴ The term “ordinary” reader refers to untrained readers of the Bible. For example, readers that have no knowledge of the historical or social contexts of when biblical texts were written (or to which biblical texts refer), the higher critical methods of interpreting the Bible, and knowledge of either Greek, Hebrew, or Latin. The term was coined by the founder of CBS, Gerald O. West. As I am borrowing the term from West’s work, “ordinary” will always be included in quotation marks in this thesis. For West’s explanation of the term, see: Gerald O. West, *The Academy of the Poor: Towards a Dialogical Reading of the Bible* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), *Contextual Bible Study* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 1993), *Biblical Hermeneutics of Liberation: Modes of Reading the Bible in the South African Context* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 1991).

The *Why* of “When the Bible Meets the Black Stuff” or Why this Research is Important

The title of this thesis, “When the Bible Meets the Black Stuff: A Contextual Bible Study Experiment”, is a relatively ambiguous summary of the motives, content, and purpose of the research project it represents. In fact, there are five specific ambiguities that are directly present within this title:

1. To what the term “black stuff” refers;
2. To what “Contextual Bible Study” refers;
3. Why this project is referred to as an “experiment”;
4. Why the Bible has been chosen as the desired text to work with;
5. The purpose of the opening adverb “when.”

Firstly, the term “black stuff” is common British slang for coal and was used repeatedly as such by the coal miners that participated in this study. It carries with it a notion of nostalgia, particularly for a time when coal mining was at its peak in Britain when the vast majority of working-class⁵ peoples’ lives relied upon the coal-mining industry. The term was used most notably in the title of an influential British television play called “The Black Stuff”⁶ and the follow-up television drama series “Boys from the Blackstuff.”⁷

The term has strong connections to the Thatcherite era, particularly the issues of mass involuntary redundancy and unemployment. It therefore acts as a

⁵ How the term “working-class” has been used in this research project will be examined at length in chapter four.

⁶ This play originally aired on BBC1 on 2nd January 1980.

⁷ This series was first transmitted from 10th October to 7th November 1982 on BBC2. Although in this series the “black stuff” can be taken to mean tarmac (as the men the series follows initially took up casual employment as tarmac layers in the original play, yet were later made unemployed), the fact that the series is set during the Thatcher era when Britain was hit hard by economic recession and mass unemployment (most notably for coal miners) means the connotations of the term cannot be ignored.

signpost to these issues, which, as I will soon demonstrate, came to dominate this research project (primarily because the miners who contributed to this study had all been made involuntarily redundant from their industry at some point in their lives).

Secondly, CBS is a socially-engaged, community-led Bible reading methodology that encourages “ordinary” untrained readers to read biblical texts in light of their current personal or collective circumstances and needs, thus transforming the texts into literary platforms upon which social change can be launched. CBS originates from the racially-politicised context of 1980s South Africa and is associated first and foremost with its creator Gerald O. West (Senior Professor at the University of KwaZulu-Natal) and the Ujamaa Centre for Biblical and Theological Community Development and Research (founded in 1985 in affiliation with the University of KwaZulu-Natal to facilitate social change for the poorest sections of South African society). As a relatively new Bible reading methodology, its usage in the academy is still in its infancy, although it is growing in popularity amongst biblical scholars. Because of this, many issues can be found within extant CBS practices and discourse (something that can be expected of new methodologies). Work such as mine, therefore, hopes to develop CBS into a more methodologically and ideologically rigorous and, given its focus, contextually-sensitive approach to Biblical Studies research.

Thirdly, I chose to describe this research project as an “experiment” because, at the time of writing, this thesis is the first of its kind to be solely concerned with the rigorous methodological development of CBS in light of extant sociological and anthropological methodologies. Whilst CBS has already been used in a number of different contexts, there has yet to be any acknowledgement of the contextually-bound nature of CBS (which is responsible for the current development of its method and discourse), nor any consideration for the need to contextually nuance CBS when it is being used. My project is therefore an “experiment” as my proposal to ground CBS in ethnography has been an experimental process, with the revisions I have made to CBS occurring in real time. My use of “experiment” therefore attempts to positively harness the creative uncertainty of my research and the reality that initially, I could not be sure about its potential outcomes.

Fourthly, the Bible was chosen as the desired text to work with for the following five reasons:

1. The Bible is more than a religious text; it is a cultural document, particularly in Britain where it has influenced the development of law, language, culture, and identity. Additionally, the Bible still plays a significant role in contemporary Britain and resonances of biblical texts can be found in almost all aspects of British society, from politics, television, film, and music, to literature, poetry, and art;⁸
2. The Bible is a highly accessible document as a reader can freely engage with biblical texts without possessing any prior knowledge, training, or expertise. In addition to this, the structure of the Bible also enhances its accessibility as it is already divided into small, complete sections. A reader does not need to read an extensive amount of text to begin engaging with a particular story or theme. Modern translations also render the Bible more accessible through their emphasis on mirroring modern expressions;
3. The Bible is a familiar text for British people as it is a text that is encountered at various, often important, stages of an average British person's life (something that is mirrored by the church attendance saying “hatch, match, and dispatch”). It can therefore be safely assumed that the Bible is the one book that everyone in Britain will have heard of, regardless of whether they identify it as their religious text;

⁸ Much has already been done on this topic in a number of disciplines. For example, in Biblical Studies, the focus has primarily been upon the reception history of biblical texts and the state of biblical literacy in the contemporary West. Two significant volumes in these areas are: Emma England and William John Lyons, eds., *Reception History and Biblical Studies: Theory and Practice* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015) and Katie B. Edwards, ed., *Rethinking Biblical Literacy* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015). In the Social Sciences, and more specifically the fields of the sociology and anthropology of religion, focus has instead been upon the changing religious landscape of Britain, the rise of secularity, and the increasing identification of modern Britain as culturally Christian, rather than practising. Prominent works in this area include those by Linda Woodhead, Rebecca Catto, Grace Davie, Paul Heelas, and Steve Bruce, for example, see: Linda Woodhead and Rebecca Catto, eds., *Religion and Change in Modern Britain* (London: Routledge, 2012), Grace Davie, Paul Heelas, and Linda Woodhead, *Predicting Religion: Christian, Secular and Alternative Futures* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), and Steve Bruce, *Secularization: In Defence Of An Unfashionable Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

4. The Bible can also be considered a trigger document as it contains a wide range of genres covering almost every aspect of human experience. Consequently, it lends itself well to having real-life parallels drawn with it. Additionally, it has long been considered a book of guidance that can be turned to in times of need. This aura of aid again points to the Bible’s ability to be appealed to when seeking to examine human experience;
5. Finally, through choosing to focus the coal miners’ collective interpretative lens on biblical texts, this project overtly sought to challenge the clichéd notion that to further understand both the text being read and the contextual lens through which it is being read, the text and context must directly relate to one another. For example, throughout the duration of my PhD I have been repeatedly asked why I did not use “classic working-class” texts such as *A Kestrel for a Knave*,⁹ *Sons and Lovers*,¹⁰ *Germinal*,¹¹ or *The Road to Wigan Pier*.¹² By purposefully inserting distance into this process, I have been able to demonstrate that it is not necessary for the text and context to be directly related in order to develop readings that provide insight into both the text itself and the context of those doing the reading. In addition to this, the use of biblical texts also demonstrates that the participating coal miners’ context does not confine them to certain literary genres, which upon closer inspection may be politically problematic or historically and/or contextually disconnected.

And finally, the opening “when” of this project’s title was chosen to capture the notion that this thesis is a record of a moment in time when the Bible and the unique culture of the British coal-mining industry met. However, this aspect of my research project requires further unpacking, as the reasons behind deliberately instigating this meeting are not obvious.

⁹ Barry Hines, *A Kestrel for a Knave* (London: Penguin Modern Classics, 2000).

¹⁰ D. H. Lawrence, *Sons and Lovers* (London: Penguin Classics, 2006)

¹¹ Emile Zola, *Germinal* (London: Penguin Classics, 2004).

¹² George Orwell, *The Road to Wigan Pier* (London: Penguin Modern Classics, 2001).

This meeting of text (the Bible) and context (coal mining) was a deliberately staged one, as it did not occur organically since the participants were not already seeking to engage with the Bible, nor was it already in the process of happening since none of the coal miners were already Bible readers, nor did they consider themselves to have a relationship with the Bible. The participants that were recruited were therefore not recruited according to religious affiliation or religious institutions. Only one participant—Mr Blue¹³—considered himself to be a regular Bible reader, owing to his identification as a Christian and lay preacher.¹⁴ However, Mr Blue did not participate in the group CBS sessions and was not recruited because of this identification, an issue discussed later.

Because of this project’s purposefully staged nature, its *why* needs explaining before its *how*. In fact, four specific *whys* can be asked of this project:

1. Why would someone wish to stage this meeting of text and context?
2. Why were South Derbyshire coal miners chosen as the context for this project?
3. Why, once staged, would this meeting be of interest or importance to anyone?
4. Why, if this project’s focus is upon grounding CBS in ethnography (and thus a methodological development of CBS), did I even need to stage such a meeting?

Firstly, this project’s staging of a meeting between text and context is, in fact, nothing new; as Daniel Patte¹⁵ reminds us, the output of Biblical Studies has always been a product of a meeting between text and context. However, academia’s desire for objectivity led to a deliberate downplaying and disregard for

¹³ For ethical reasons, all participants were provided with pseudonyms.

¹⁴ Mr Blue is an ex-coal miner who now works for the Mines Rescue Service and thus still has direct and regular interaction with coal miners and the industry.

¹⁵ Daniel Patte, “Acknowledging the Contextual Character of Male, European-American Critical Exegeses: An Androcritical Perspective,” in *Reading from this Place: Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in the United States, Volume One*, eds. Fernando F. Segovia and Mary Ann Tolbert (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 35-55.

the role context plays in the interpretive process.¹⁶ My research therefore seeks to (re-)emphasise the role that context plays in the interpretative process and to stress its inescapability and importance in biblical interpretation.

In addition to restoring a focus upon the importance of context, my research also seeks to emphasise that everyone has a context and that every context has an equally valid interpretive lens through which a text can be read. Such a stance emphasises interpretative equality, whereby all contextual interpretations are valid and valued, even if they can be contested. The purposeful staging of this meeting between text and context, then, directly demonstrates how the creation of an environment whereby the interpretive contextual lens of all individuals is appreciated and valued is thoroughly possible.

Secondly, why were South Derbyshire coal miners chosen as the context for this project and to demonstrate my proposal for grounding CBS in ethnography? There are three answers to this question.

First, I chose to ethnographically research and “read with”¹⁷ South Derbyshire coal miners because their context is my context. As the daughter of a South Derbyshire coal miner, I was already familiar with the lived and embodied realities of such men and could readily gain access to participants as I already knew both gate-keepers and members. This was particularly important owing to the time restraints of PhD research.

Second, the interpretive dialogue that my research records and analyses was staged with the intention of providing individuals who have not been afforded the opportunity to participate within the discipline of Biblical Studies a chance to have their interpretations heard and taken seriously. Whilst other disciplines have taken an interest in the lives of “ordinary,” often working-class people and have included such people in research on reading and interpretation of texts, Biblical Studies has yet to show much interest in such voices. For example, both

¹⁶ See: Patte, “Acknowledging the Contextual Character of Male, European-American Critical Exegeses” 35-55.

¹⁷ “Reading with” is the popular expression used to describe the process of collaborative reading that takes place during CBS. It was also coined by West and will be examined in chapter five.

Christopher Hill¹⁸ and Edward Palmer Thompson¹⁹ sought to investigate how the Bible and Church teachings were used and interpreted at a grass-roots level by the British public and how this then related to the development of wider society, particularly in relation to the monarchy, national and international politics, and economics. Similarly, Richard Hoggart has studied at length the lives of working-class people, including a study of both their religious and literary lives.²⁰ The latter has also been the focus of studies by Raymond Williams,²¹ and David Barton and Mary Hamilton.²²

However, such scholars are not biblical scholars and do not approach the subject of “ordinary” readers from a ‘Biblical Studies perspective’. Hill and Thompson, for example, are social historians who have primarily sought to investigate how the Bible and Church teachings have been used and understood by “ordinary” readers in relation to various social factors. I am therefore referring solely to the lack of interest in “ordinary” readers within Biblical Studies in relation to the academic practices of exegesis, hermeneutics, and biblical interpretation. In addition to this, such studies often conflate the Bible (and its reading/readership) with the Church, theology, and religion or religiosity. Social historians like Hill and Thompson were concerned with a much wider and more general recording of “history from below” and how this related to institutionalised religion, rather than with recording accounts of how “ordinary” readers interpreted biblical texts. The South Derbyshire coal-mining context was therefore chosen because the individuals present within it represent both their own unique cultural context, which has yet to play any part within Biblical Studies, but also a wider cultural context (namely that of the British working-class), which is also yet to feature within Biblical Studies.

¹⁸ See: Christopher Hill, *Puritanism and Revolution: Studies in Interpretation of the English Revolution of the 17th Century* (London: Penguin, 1990), *The English Bible and the Seventeenth-Century Revolution: Uses of the Bible in 17th-century England* (London: Penguin, 1993).

¹⁹ See: E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980).

²⁰ See: Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy: Aspects of Working-Class Life* (London: Penguin Modern Classics, 2009).

²¹ See: Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution* (Cardigan: Parthian Books, 2011).

²² See: David Barton and Mary Hamilton, *Local Literacies: Reading and Writing in One Community* (Oxon: Routledge, 2012) and David Barton, Mary Hamilton, and Roz Ivanic, *Situated Literacies: Reading and Writing in Context* (London: Routledge, 2000).

And finally, this staging of a meeting between text and context occurred primarily as a response to my observation that within Biblical Studies, the interpretations produced by white European-American male biblical scholars (the dominant reader within the discipline)²³ are understood as the way in which all white European-American males read and interpret biblical texts. This is problematic for two reasons. Firstly, the interpretations produced by such scholars have thus far been espoused as objective and scientific, and are thus devoid of any contextual subjectivity. Secondly, the assumption that their voice represents that of all white Western male readers is simply false.²⁴

Only recently have biblical scholars started proposing that the interpretations produced by this group of readers are themselves contextual, as they reflect the specific interests and concerns of the men that form this particular group. A similar situation is also occurring in the field of white studies where the concept of whiteness and the way in which it has traditionally been understood,

²³ Evidence for this assertion can be found in the Society of Biblical Literature's (SBL) member statistics. For example, in 2014 male membership to the SBL totalled 6310 members, whereas female membership only totalled 1992, thus making female membership just shy of 24%. See: The Society of Biblical Literature, "Facts and Figures," 13 August 2015, <http://www.sbl-site.org/SBLDashboard.aspx>. Similarly, if we consider the 2014 member profile report we find that European or Caucasian ethnicity totals a huge 86.4% of the membership. See: The Society of Biblical Literature, "SBL Member Profile November 2014," November 2014, <http://www.sbl-site.org/assets/pdfs/memberProfileReport2014.pdf>, 13. Also, each year the SBL offers a series of travel grants to aid members from "marginalised" contexts (specifically ICI-qualifying countries) to attend the annual meeting in North America. See: The Society of Biblical Literature, "Annual Meeting Travel Grants," 2015, <https://www.sbl-site.org/membership/AMtravelgrant.aspx>. Additionally, at the time of writing a number of fierce debates are ongoing within Biblical Studies concerning white male privilege of the discipline, the denial of this reality by some white male biblical scholars, and the impact this is having upon female and minority biblical scholars. Whilst it is not within the remit of this thesis to interrogate this issue further, the following are examples of this debate: Jim West, "Things You Probably Don't Know About Academia," *Zwingliusredivivus*, 14 July 2015, <https://zwingliusredivivus.wordpress.com/2015/07/14/things-you-probably-dont-know-about-academia/>; Hector Avalos, "Jim West and White Privilege in the Society of Biblical Literature," *Debunking Christianity*, 15 July 2015, <http://debunkingchristianity.blogspot.co.uk/2015/07/jim-west-and-white-privilege-in-society.html>; Francesca Stavrakopoulou, "Female academics: don't power dress, forget heels – and no flowing hair allowed," *The Guardian*, 26 October 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/higher-education-network/blog/2014/oct/26/-sp-female-academics-dont-power-dress-forget-heels-and-no-flowing-hair-allowed>.

²⁴ I first realised this reverse orientalism when attending the SBL's annual meetings. Whilst the SBL now recognises that context plays a significant role in the interpretation of biblical texts, the research units that focus specifically on contextual readings (such as the "African Biblical Hermeneutics," "African-American Biblical Hermeneutics," "Asian and Asian-American Hermeneutics," "the Ethnic Chinese Biblical Colloquium," and "Islands, Islanders and Scriptures" research units) often perpetuate the false notion that the interpretations emerging from the centres for Biblical Studies in the West are representative of all Western contexts.

represented, and expressed in both society and research is being challenged and subverted.²⁵

Patte has similarly sought to challenge the notion that Western Biblical Studies is context-less by arguing that it is essential that interpretations produced by white European-American male biblical scholars are acknowledged as being products of the contextual concerns of this specific demographic.²⁶ Patte argues that if the contextual nature of such interpretations is not acknowledged, then the supposedly context-less nature of Western Biblical Studies will continue to produce and perpetuate readings that are alienating, oppressive, and unjust.²⁷ If we are more forthcoming with acknowledging that European-American Biblical Studies is a product of a particular context, the validity and legitimacy of the readings it has produced will not be jeopardised,²⁸ but instead it will ensure that this context (and the interpretations it has produced) is not conflated with individuals that share similar characteristics, such as the coal miners in this study. Whilst the coal miners in this study are also white European men, this does not mean they share the same contextual concerns as white European male biblical scholars. It cannot be assumed, then, that they interpret the Bible in the same manner.

In addition to Patte’s call to acknowledge the dominance and impact that the contextual concerns of one specific demographic of men have had upon the global development of Biblical Studies, it is also important to recognise that when a dominant demographic is considered the norm, it also often becomes invisible and is thus rarely interrogated. This not only means that the most dominant context is neglected, but that those contexts that are falsely aligned with the dominant context are neglected also. This neglect costs such contexts greatly; rarely are time

²⁵ For example, see: Michele Fine, “Witnessing Whiteness/Gathering Intelligence,” in *Off White: Readings on Power, Privilege, and Resistance*, eds. Michelle Fine et al. (London: Routledge, 2004), 245-256.

²⁶ Patte, “Acknowledging the Contextual Character of Male, European-American Critical Exegeses,” 35-55.

²⁷ Patte, “Acknowledging the Contextual Character of Male, European-American Critical Exegeses,” 36.

²⁸ Patte, “Acknowledging the Contextual Character of Male, European-American Critical Exegeses,” 39.

and resources devoted to actually investigating and understanding the lived and embodied realities of those within such contexts.²⁹

Whilst the coal-mining context has been the subject of a number of prominent social scientific, anthropological, economic, historical, and literary studies,³⁰ then, where Biblical Studies is concerned, the context is yet to feature, presumably because of the false assumption that we know how those in such a context would read biblical texts because they share some demographics of the dominant reader within Biblical Studies: white, Western, and male.

Third, why would this staged meeting be of any interest or importance to anyone? I believe that this meeting of text and context is of significant interest to those who participated in the project. The coal miners who participated in the CBS sessions found the opportunity to reflect upon their contextual circumstances through the medium of textual analysis to be an extremely helpful, illuminating, and freeing experience. In addition to this, the sophistication and complexity of the contextual biblical interpretations produced by these men both surprised and pleased them. It gave them an opportunity to express and witness a side to themselves that is rarely given the opportunity to come to the fore. For example, as chapter four will demonstrate, the participants in this study have spent a life-time working in a highly masculinised industry where strength, brawn, and physical workmanship are prized over intellectual ability. This project gave them an opportunity to see just how articulate, sophisticated, and creative they could be in an environment that valued these attributes. This meeting of text and context is also of benefit to the academy, particularly Biblical Studies, as it directly demonstrates the rich depth, complexity, and originality of the “ordinary” interpretive lens. The function of such readings is therefore to disrupt and complicate widely accepted extant interpretations of biblical texts. Thus, the results of this project will hopefully encourage other biblical scholars to see the value in

²⁹ This is one argument that is being used in the analysis of the current masculinities crisis as it has been proposed that because of the centuries-long dominance of male patriarchy, it has long been assumed that we know all about men. In fact, because they have always been in a position of power and dominance, the many contexts that exist within the world of men have never been fully investigated or analysed. Therefore, we do not know nearly as much about men as we may have previously assumed.

³⁰ See chapter four for a detailed analysis of such works.

engaging with “ordinary” readers and the vast benefits that public knowledge and collaborative or co-constructed knowledge can bring to Biblical Studies.

And finally, as this project is first and foremost focused upon the methodological development of CBS via the incorporation of ethnography, why, then, did I deem it necessary to put my proposals into practice? Quite simply, I felt that to critique how CBS has thus far been used and to propose a significant methodological amendment so that it can be used more appropriately and effectively would have been deeply suspect if I lacked first-hand knowledge of what it is actually like to use CBS. This project therefore demonstrates the need and efficacy of my proposals by showing how they work in practice.

Ultimately, it could be argued that the complex “hybridity”³¹ of my positionality³² as a working-class woman in academia³³ was the driving force behind my desire to conduct research with members of the British working-class and to utilise a methodology that allowed me to privilege working-class voices and thrust them disruptively into the hallowed halls of academia’s ivory tower. I also wanted to showcase the necessity and effectiveness of my methodological refinement of CBS by putting the method into practice.

³¹ Helen Lucey, June Melody, and Valerie Walkerdine, “Uneasy Hybrids: Psychosocial aspects of becoming educationally successful for working-class young women,” in *The RoutledgeFalmer Reader in Gender and Education*, eds. Madeleine Arnot and Mairtin Mac an Ghaill (London: Routledge, 2006), 238-251 (238).

³² “Positionality” is used throughout this thesis to refer to the innumerable biases that develop as a result of and inform every individual’s placement in and perspective of the social world. It seeks to acknowledge the complex multi-faceted, layered nature of context, as well as the notion that each individual can inhabit and embody multiple positionalities. The concept of positionality is particularly important for feminist and identity (such as class, race, gender, and sexuality) research. For more, see: Rabia Ali, “Rethinking representation: negotiating positionality, power and space in the field,” *Gender, Place & Culture* 20 (2014): 1-18, and Jody Mellor, Nicola Ingram, Jessie Abrahams, and Phoebe Beedell, “Class matters in the interview setting? Positionality, situatedness and class,” *British Educational Research Journal* 40/1 (2014): 135-149.

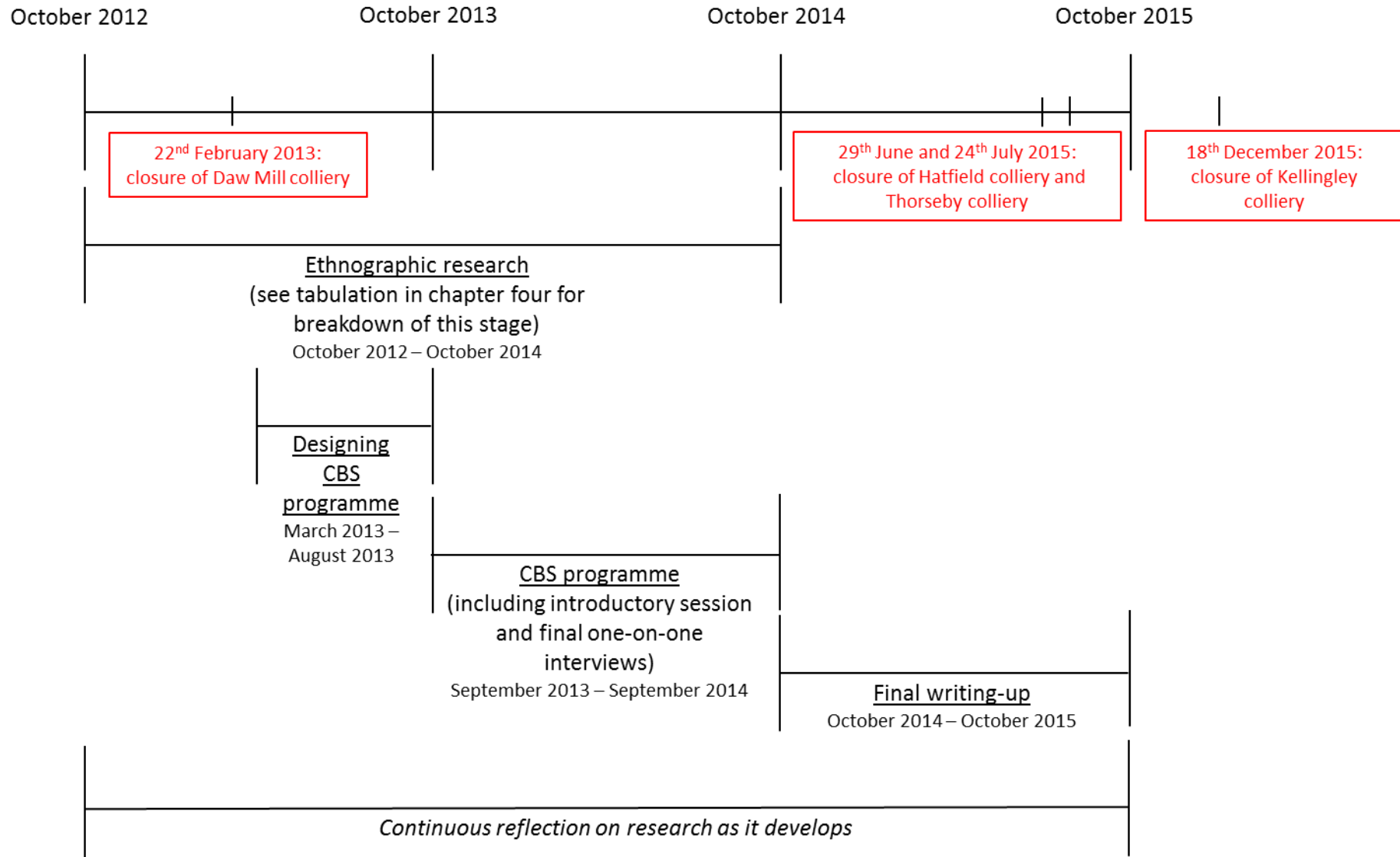
³³ A positionality that will be explored at length in chapter two.

How this Research Took Shape

As the primary assertion of this research project is that CBS should be methodologically amended so that it must always begin with a detailed ethnographic study of the group being “read with,” and as I decided that I would put into practice the proposals I was making, I devoted the first year of my research to ethnographically immersing myself in my research field, which I am defining as the culture and context of the men living in South Derbyshire that were still employed as coal miners. Only after spending time in the field did I begin to construct the CBS programme and “read with” coal miners. Whilst a detailed “audit trail”³⁴ timeline of the ethnographic work I conducted will be provided in chapter four, the following is a concise timeline of my project’s main stages:

³⁴ A term borrowed from Sharon A. Bong, see: Sharon A. Bong, “Debunking Myths in CAQDAS Use and Coding in Qualitative Data Analysis: Experiences with and Reflections on Grounded Theory Methodology,” *Historical Social Research, Supplement* 19 (2007): 258-275, “Debunking Myths in Qualitative Data Analysis,” *Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 3/2/10 (2002): n.p.

Timeline of Overall Research Project



The research stage of this project was therefore divided into two distinct phases, the first focusing upon ethnographically researching and analysing male coal-mining culture in South Derbyshire and the second focusing upon uncovering how South Derbyshire coal miners read and interpret biblical texts. Alongside these two distinct phases ran my overall research goal, which was to assess implementing ethnography as the obligatory initial stage of CBS. Whilst I was primarily concerned with method, the findings that the implementation of my methodological refinements generated are equally important. The structure of this thesis has therefore been designed to mirror this; an ethnography methods chapter is followed by an ethnography findings chapter, then the CBS methods chapter is followed by a CBS findings chapter.

As later chapters will explain and demonstrate, the primary reason for my assertion that a detailed ethnographic study of the group being “read with” should be conducted as the initial stage of CBS is so that the texts and themes chosen for study resonate as strongly as possible with the group. Whilst the full extent of my ethnographic findings will be examined in chapter four, I will now summarise the five findings that I isolated as typifying the unique culture of South Derbyshire coal miners:

1. The long-standing tempestuous relationship between the workforce of the coal-mining industry and the management/owners of coal mines. This relationship has resulted in the industry being dominated by a powerful “Us versus Them”³⁵ mentality;
2. How commonplace it is for coal miners to face both serious injury and/or death in the workplace;
3. The strong sense of community that develops both within the coal mine itself and within the surrounds of the industry;

³⁵ Whilst this phrase is my own, I have discovered a similar phrase used by Jim Bullock in his autobiography *THEM and US* to also describe the relationship between coal miners and colliery owners or companies. See: Jim Bullock, *THEM and US: History of the Mining Industry* (London: Souvenir Press Ltd, 1972). Similarly, it also features in Hoggart’s work, as well as in the reflections of numerous working-class women in academia. I will return to such works in chapters two and four. I am pleased to have come across this phrase in extant studies of coal-mining culture as it confirms the accuracy of my own findings.

4. The inseparable connection of vocation and identity for coal miners and the disastrous impact colliery closures have upon both collective and individual identity;
5. The powerful and inescapable single-gendered reality of the workplace and the existence (and pressure) of “hypermasculinity” and “machismo.”

I used then used these observations as the contextual themes of the CBS programme.

Before I continue explaining the development of this research, I want to explain how coal miners were recruited to participate in the CBS programme.³⁶ Initially, I intended to recruit participants directly from Daw Mill colliery in Warwickshire, the nearest remaining colliery to South Derbyshire.³⁷ After liaising with the HR representatives of both UK Coal³⁸ and Daw Mill colliery, I was granted permission to recruit men onsite.³⁹ However, just as this was confirmed, Daw Mill colliery was unexpectedly closed owing to a catastrophic fire caused by spontaneous combustion, resulting in the mass involuntary redundancy of 650 men.⁴⁰ Simultaneously, I had begun liaising with the ex-coal miners employed by my local branch of the Mines Rescue Service who were also keen to participate. However, Daw Mill colliery’s closure dramatically impacted the men working across this industry as the colliery was one of their most important clients and with its closure they lost a regular, important source of income. This meant that the branch had to widen their service area to attract more clients and thus no longer had time or resources to participate.

Consequently, the only way to recruit participants was to contact men I already knew. Five volunteered to participate in the CBS programme. In addition to

³⁶ How I recruited informants for my ethnographic study will be covered in detail in chapters three and four.

³⁷ My personal connection to the coal-mining industry meant that I knew that this colliery employed a number of coal miners who had not only trained and worked as coal miners in the South Derbyshire area, but who also still lived in the South Derbyshire area.

³⁸ The company that owned the colliery.

³⁹ It was my intention to conduct the CBS sessions in the social areas of the colliery (such as in the canteen).

⁴⁰ This turn of events will be one of the focuses of chapter three.

this, one of the employees of the Mines Rescue Service still agreed to participate in the project despite the company’s changing situation, Mr Blue.

As I began my ethnographic research in September 2012, I had already started discerning the five contextual themes necessary for the development of the CBS programme before the closure of Daw Mill colliery in February 2013 and the subsequent demise of Britain’s coal-mining industry by late 2015.⁴¹ As these events were unfolding before my eyes, and as the true extent of their impact has still yet to be fully known, I made the decision to continue developing the CBS programme in line with my initial ethnographic observations. It was impossible for me to anticipate the overwhelming impact this chain of events would come to have upon my research. For example, whilst this project was conceived as a means for the participants to reflect upon their lives as coal miners via a series of biblical texts, it became evident that because of recent events, the issue of mass involuntary redundancy would take precedence over all other proposed topics of reflection and that this issue would dominate my research. I therefore allowed the current contextual circumstances of the participants to guide my research as the project’s focus upon involuntary redundancy occurred organically owing to the deeply significant role it was playing in the coal miners’ lives. As chapters four and six will demonstrate, my research is reflective of how the participants interpreted both their social world and a series of biblical texts at a specific moment in time—a moment participants experienced as traumatic. Because my research took place at a time of great upheaval and uncertainty,⁴² I endeavoured at all times to be sensitive to the changes that were occurring, to reflect upon them in my research, and to adapt this project accordingly.

⁴¹ As by the end of 2015 all remaining deep-coal collieries in Britain had closed. The final four collieries were Daw Mill, Thoresby, Kellingley (all of which were owned by UK Coal), and Hatfield (which was owned by an employee-benefit trust).

⁴² A deeply personal example of such upheaval occurred in my own life whilst I was conducting this research. Not only was my own father one of the coal miners made involuntarily redundant by the closure of Daw Mill colliery, but his subsequent unemployment led to the breakdown of his three-decade long marriage to my mother and his decision to become estranged from my sister and I—a situation that has still not been resolved. I have therefore experienced first-hand how traumatic the demise of the coal-mining industry has been for coal miners and the pain this has caused lies hidden within the words of this thesis.

The next stage was conducted collaboratively with Mr Blue, as together we determined what biblical themes and passages the CBS sessions should focus upon.⁴³ We isolated a set of themes that had a biblical foundation and which strongly resonated with my key observations of coal-mining culture:

1. Employer and employee relationships, as well as the idea of “God as employer”;
2. Hell, judgement, darkness (both literal and metaphorical), and death;
3. Community, leisure time, and pleasure;
4. Destiny, choices, and identity (both collective and individual);
5. “Masculinity,” male camaraderie, and the roles of men and women.

Mr Blue proposed that it would be interesting if each theme was explored from both an Old Testament and New Testament perspective, as this would provide the participants with an opportunity to explore as much of the Bible as possible. To reflect upon these themes, we selected the following twelve biblical passages,⁴⁴ two passages for the first four themes and four shorter passages for the last theme:

1. Jeremiah 18:1-12
2. Matthew 20:1-16
3. Job 17:1-16
4. Revelation 20
5. Proverbs 18:1-24

⁴³ I chose not involve the CBS group in this stage of the project, primarily for practical reasons. For example, the inherent limitations of a PhD meant that I did not have time to research which texts each man already knew and did not know and what they thought of each suggested text. Instead, I relied upon the contributions of Mr Blue. In the post-programme interviews it transpired that no participant would have wanted involvement in this stage, primarily because participants felt they did not have enough pre-existing knowledge of the Bible to adequately contribute to this particular discussion. However, it would be interesting to see how the sessions, and the themes that came to dominate them, may have been different if the coal miners had chosen the texts we read.

⁴⁴ The passages were not selected as collaboratively as the biblical themes. Mr Blue made a variety of suggestions at our meeting, but I made the final decision.

6. Acts 4:32-37 and Acts 5:1-11

7. Genesis 11:1-9

8. Ephesians 1:3-14

9. Genesis 1:26-31

10. Malachi 2:10-16

11. 1 Peter 3:1-7

12. 1 Corinthians 11:2-16

I purposefully chose passages that were varied in nature not only to ensure that the participants were able to encounter as much of the Bible as possible, but also to investigate how much of the Bible still has relevance for contemporary audiences.

The CBS group consisted of five men, Mr Black, Mr Brown, Mr Green, Mr Purple, and Mr Red.⁴⁵ Mr Blue acted as a “control” reader and produced his own individual interpretations of each text, which he submitted in essay form via email. Mr Blue was assigned this role so that I could assess whether a coal miner on his own would develop the same interpretations as the group. Indeed, on the whole, this was the case. Mr Blue was always keen to hear how his readings compared to those of the group so I often sent him short summaries of the group’s interpretations after he had submitted his own. Similarly, the group were also keen to hear Mr Blue’s interpretations.

As this thesis is the result of a PhD research project, I have been constrained by the limitations of a PhD thesis, which resulted in my being forced to prioritise the data generated by my project. This led to the exclusion of Mr Blue’s individual interpretations. My commitment to transparency means that I have, however, still included him in the description of the project’s proceedings. Chapter six will therefore only focus upon the interpretations of the group.

⁴⁵ Chapter four will offer a detailed introduction to the men that formed this group.

Once all of these initial decisions had been established, the coal miners and I met as a group for an introductory meeting where I provided each participant with a booklet explaining CBS, a "prompt sheet,"⁴⁶ a breakdown of the texts and themes to be interrogated, and the dates of each session. Mr Blue was also given a selection of similar documents explaining his role. The introductory session primarily functioned as an opportunity to explain the project in greater detail and for the coal miners to ask any questions they had about the project.

I created the "prompt sheet" to help the coal miners settle back into the habit of reading texts within an analytical mind-set and framework, a habit that many individuals leave behind upon leaving school. During the introductory session, the group stressed that they were very under-confident when it came to their literacy skills and analytical abilities and were thus grateful for this sheet. Additionally, the coal miners made it clear that they were also under-confident in their ability to read the Bible and approached the sessions with the belief that it was a "difficult" book to read.

The participants and I then met as a group once a month to discuss the passage and theme at hand. Each was given the passage to be discussed one month in advance and was asked to read and annotate the text in any way that suited them prior to the group meeting. This task became affectionately known as "homework." I similarly sent Mr Blue a copy of each passage via email on a monthly basis. Upon reading the passage he would then compose a short essay (approximately 1-3 pages of A4) explaining his interpretations of the text.

The format of the group meetings was relatively simple. First, we read the text aloud and discussed it as a group using their "homeworks." During the sessions I encouraged the group to view me as a peer and contrary to the traditional CBS model I did not approach the sessions with a list of questions for the coal miners to

⁴⁶ The "prompt sheet" consisted of a basic set of instructions for interpreting texts. For example, it contained advice such as: "read the text both silently and aloud," "have a pen in your hand when reading so you can highlight any aspects that interest you," and "look out for parts you may agree with, disagree with, or find surprising, challenging or confusing." The inspiration for this reading tool came from my experience as a teacher (as for a number of years I was employed as a cover supervisor in a senior school and I currently work as a GCSE English teacher in an alternative curriculum school). I therefore make regular use of such tools to help students interpret texts, particularly poetry. Similar techniques can be found on the BBC's *Bitesize* website, see: BBC Bitesize, "Responding to Poetry," 2017, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/education/guides/zcrpycw/revision>.

answer, nor did I do extensive research into the passages we were reading prior to the group sessions. It was important to me that the interpretive process was a holistic one where the group’s interrogations of the texts developed at their own pace and in whichever direction they saw fit. The only questions I asked during the sessions were *ad hoc* ones designed to encourage more in-depth explanations of the points being made. In addition, I would also ask the group to further explain the contextual resonances they were drawing, as even after extensively researching coal mining, my knowledge was often lacking.

Although the group did generally treat me as a peer, they did, at times, ask questions that were clearly searching for expert knowledge. For example, when reading Jeremiah, they wanted to know exactly who Jeremiah was, when he had lived, and why he was deemed important enough to have his own book in the Bible. I always endeavoured to answer such questions and if my knowledge was lacking, I would conduct research after the session and present it at the beginning of the next one. When it came to questions about how the text should be interpreted “properly,” however, I always encouraged them to see the validity of their own interpretations.

The sessions were recorded in a variety of ways in order to ensure that as much data as possible was generated. A tabulation of the recording methods used during the sessions can be found in Appendix 1. Analysing the coal miners’ readings in light of the ethnographic findings, as well as assessing the efficacy of grounding CBS in ethnography marked the final stage of the project.

Participant Consent

This project was successfully awarded full ethical approval and complies with the ethical guidelines produced and enforced by the University of Sheffield. Per the ethical review, each participant in this research project was required to give written

consent confirming their willingness to participate. A list of all consent forms used during this research project⁴⁷ can be found in Appendix 2.

Terminological Clarification

Owing to the interdisciplinary nature of this research project it has been necessary for me to make use of various complex and contested terms or concepts from a variety of disciplines in an often general manner (for example, "working-class"). Whilst I have endeavoured to provide explanations of how such terms have been used, as well as details of what definitions and studies have informed their use, it is not within the remit of this thesis to devote time to exploring them as fully as possible.

It is also necessary that I clarify how I am using the term "CBS." CBS has been used throughout this thesis to refer specifically to the Contextual Bible Study methodology developed in South Africa. However, West and the Ujamaa Centre often use CBS to refer to both a process and a product. For example, the method used to "read with" "ordinary" readers is referred to as "CBS," yet a reading produced by "ordinary" readers is called "a CBS." However, I use CBS to refer solely to a process. In addition to this, I also treat CBS as a research process, thus the revisions I have made to this process have been done in light of better developing CBS as a research methodology for use by members of the academy. I refer to the product of CBS as a "contextual reading."

In light of the above, I wish to stress that I have conducted this research for use within the discipline of Biblical Studies and more specifically locate myself with the field of contextual biblical interpretation. I understand "contextual biblical interpretation" to be an umbrella term for a range of approaches and methods that exist within Biblical Studies that all seek to read and interpret the Bible from the

⁴⁷ Much of the data collected via these forms has not made it into this final thesis, primarily because I have prioritised the data included to produce a coherent and streamlined thesis. However, my desire to be transparent means that I have listed them all here.

perspective of the unique cultural or contextual circumstances of real, living, embodied readers and in light of the multiplicitous historical and contemporary socio-political and economic factors that define the situatedness of such readers. This includes methodologies that do not engage with the process of “reading with” “ordinary” readers, but that instead use reading “for,” “on behalf of,” or “in light of” methods. Whilst the many methods and approaches that exist under this umbrella function according to a diverse range of motivations, agendas, and ideologies (including gender-critical,⁴⁸ feminist,⁴⁹ womanist,⁵⁰ colonial/postcolonial, post-imperialist, and post-empire,⁵¹ race-critical,⁵² post-Apartheid,⁵³ and class perspectives⁵⁴) and can be identified via a variety of often interchangeable labels (including vernacular hermeneutics, contextual hermeneutics, contextual exegesis, cultural exegesis, folk readings, and contextual biblical analysis), each approach still has the same objective of making explicit the role a reader’s contemporary context plays in the process of interpretation. Whilst the above list of motivations, agendas, ideologies, methods, and approaches do not feature within this particular research project, I have listed them so as to locate CBS alongside them within the broad field of contextual biblical interpretation.

⁴⁸ For example, see: Deryn Guest, Robert E. Goss, Mona West, and Thomas Bohache, eds., *The Queer Bible Commentary* (London: SCM Press, 2006).

⁴⁹ For example, see: Letty M. Russell, ed., *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible* (London: Westminster John Knox Press, 1985).

⁵⁰ For example, see: Gay L. Byron and Vanessa Lovelace, eds., *Womanist Interpretations of the Bible: Expanding the Discourse* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016).

⁵¹ For example, see: R. S. Sugirtharajah, ed., *The Bible and Empire: Postcolonial Explorations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), *The Bible and the Third World: Precolonial, Colonial and Postcolonial Encounters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), and *The Postcolonial Bible* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998).

⁵² For example, see: Mark G. Brett, *Ethnicity and the Bible* (Leiden: Brill, 1996).

⁵³ For example, see: Elelwani B. Farisani, “Interpreting the Bible in the context of apartheid and beyond: An African perspective,” *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 40/2 (2014): 207-225.

⁵⁴ For example, see: Robert J. Myles, “Opiate of Christ; or, John’s Gospel and the Spectre of Class,” *Postscripts* 7/3 (2011): 257–277.

CHAPTER TWO. WORKING REFLEXIVELY

During this research project a distinct and conscious emphasis was placed upon reflexivity and its role in relation to good research practice. Two aspects of my research, however, were especially influenced by my choosing to work in this manner: 1. How I understood my own complex cultural context and multidimensional identity and how my own self⁵⁵ has ultimately determined the focus and development of this project; 2. How my research has evolved and transitioned from one stage to the next. The primary focus of this chapter is thus the way these two aspects have been shaped by constant retrospective critical examination.

Central to my implementation of a reflexive working practice was the inclusion of the self as a fundamental part of/in every stage of my research. I wanted to adopt a reflexive working practice and include the self for five reasons:

1. To add a further dimension to, and significantly enhance the depth of, my study. For example, I was able to draw upon the intangible resources of instinct and emotion, as well as the vast swathes of data that the senses and biographical experiences generate;

⁵⁵ The term "self" has been used in my research in a holistic manner to refer to everything that makes a person who they are, from their thoughts, feelings, and emotions, to their experiences of the social world and the way these experiences influence, shape, and construct their personal idiosyncrasies, worldview, and beliefs. By using the term "self" I am attempting to appeal to the inarticulable and intangible embodied inner-workings that form the core of who a person is. The development of the self is thus primarily influenced by a person's context and the multiple identities they hold. However, it is not fixed, as it is constantly being re/de-constructed in accordance with new experiences.

2. To see how these additional data sets (and thus my context and identity) are informed or shaped by wider society. For me, this is most evident when I consider my research in light of my identification as a working-class woman (an identification that lies at the heart of my multi-layered context);
3. To reflect upon my own positionality and situatedness (both in general and more specifically in relation to my research) and for this to be woven into the wider cultural, political, social, and exegetical analyses of this project. The use of reflexivity and the inclusion of the self (supplemented by snippets of my own autobiographical story) has therefore allowed me to generate a multi-layered description and interpretation of this research project’s processes and findings. For example, by utilising and paying attention to my own experiences of the context I am studying, namely, that of South Derbyshire coal mining, I was better equipped to celebrate the culture of these men, whilst at the same time, being consciously aware of, and ready to negotiate and complicate, how their culture has been previously studied and represented;
4. To mitigate the problem of power. Working reflexively enabled an equilibrium to be reached between the researcher (me) and the researched, as both were equally rendered subjects to be studied and data sets to be analysed;
5. To engender multiple perspectives. This is because this way of working not only allowed me to transcend the traditional ways of doing research,⁵⁶ but by drawing reflexively upon the multiplicitous nature of the self, I was able to consider my research from multiple perspectives. As I understand the self to be a product of a number of different, often competing and conflicting, identities, each of which exists as a product of a specific set of life experiences and can be drawn upon at different occasions to navigate different social settings, each and every phenomena I encounter is thus

⁵⁶ For example, research that seeks to be objective, devoid of any biases or subjectivity, and describes itself as being in search of the “truth.” A good example of such research within the discipline of Biblical Studies is that of Larry Hurtado’s, with *Lord Jesus Christ* being one particularly clear example. See: Larry W. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003).

subject to the scrutiny of each identity (or "side" of the self). For example, whilst I identify as a postgraduate researcher, I also identify as a working-class woman. These are but two of the many "sides" of myself. As a result of this, I can therefore consider my research from the perspective of both a postgraduate researcher and a working-class woman. The consequences of this are profoundly significant for my research, not only in terms of its development, but also in understanding and articulating its purpose, worthwhileness, and value. It has enabled me to consider my research from the perspective of someone who would not traditionally enter into academia and who belongs to a community that has certain preconceptions about the existence and purpose of academics. Thus I am able to step outside of the "ivory tower" of the academy and consider the real world effects of my study. This process of utilising the many sides of the self and employing one's multiple identities to evaluate a single study can, however, result in conflict. This was certainly true for me, as I have found negotiating my burgeoning middle-class identity (a by-product of my education) alongside my staunchly held working-class identity extremely difficult. Despite the inner turmoil this process of identity negotiation has caused me, it has complicated the research process positively.

What now follows, however, is the detailed unpacking of the two main effects that working reflexively had upon this research and my reasons for choosing to work reflexively, as well as critical engagement with wider literature on the topic.

Defining Reflexivity

As reflexivity is defined differently in different disciplines, it is necessary that I clarify which extant definitions have informed my own understanding and implementation of both the concept and practice of reflexivity. In a nutshell, the understanding of reflexivity employed in this research is one that refers to the

implementation of a conscious and positive feedback loop through which the researcher critically analyses both the development of their research and their relationship with/to their research. This is one of the most common understandings of reflexivity and it can be readily found within anthropology and the social sciences.

Whilst it can be argued that the practice of reflexivity has existed for many centuries,⁵⁷ it is widely accepted that the first, most comprehensive definition of the practice as a distinct sociological method can be found in George Herbert Mead’s *Mind, Self, and Society*. Here, Mead describes how one of the primary means of developing the mind is through engaging in reflection or deliberation on one’s actions and surrounding environment. Mead describes this “reflexiveness”⁵⁸ as the “turning-back of the experience of the individual upon himself”⁵⁹ and that by doing this, an individual is “able consciously to adjust himself to that process, and to modify the resultant of that process in any given social act in terms of adjustment to it.”⁶⁰

Whilst I primarily use the phrasing “reflexive practice” or “reflexivity,” the term “reflective practice” can also be used to refer to this process of purposefully “turning-back” on oneself. The phrasing “reflective practice,” however, was coined by Donald Schön.⁶¹ Schön focuses specifically on how professionals can enhance the quality of their work by incorporating reflexivity or a “reflective practice” into their day-to-day working practice. Whilst reflexivity and reflexive/reflective practice have their origins in anthropology and the social sciences, they can now be readily found

⁵⁷ The principle concepts of reflexivity can be found in works as early as the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. See, for example, John Dewey, “My Pedagogic Creed,” *Journal of the National Education Association* 18/9 (1929): 291-295. Dewey’s work contains reflections upon the social and interactive nature of learning and teaching.

⁵⁸ George Herbert Mead, *Mind, Self, and Society: From the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934), 134.

⁵⁹ Mead, *Mind, Self, and Society*, 134.

⁶⁰ Mead, *Mind, Self, and Society*, 134.

⁶¹ Donald Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action* (New York, Basic Books: 1983).

in education, learning, and teaching studies⁶² and health care studies.⁶³ Their usage is also growing in the Arts and Humanities – as this research demonstrates.

Before I further unpack which extant definitions of reflexivity have informed my own definition, I will mirror Michael Ashmore’s unpacking of the term by first examining its etymology. When tracing the etymology of reflexivity, Ashmore notes that the prefix “re-” evokes notions of a “back, again, against, reversed”⁶⁴ movement and that the Latin root of the suffix is “*flectere*,”⁶⁵ which means “to bend.”⁶⁶ Ashmore brings these two notions together to form “to bend back” or “to bend again,”⁶⁷ concluding that “even here we can glimpse a disturbing sense of redirection and even reversal that implies some disruption of the normal course of things.”⁶⁸ Ashmore goes on to quip that even at the etymological level there can be detected a splitting of the term into two separate “(if overlapping)”⁶⁹ concepts, those of “*reflect*”⁷⁰ and “*reflex*”⁷¹ (italics in original). Ashmore concludes his etymological examination by noting that “[w]ith an etymological background as complex as this, it is not surprising that uses of “reflexive” and “reflexivity” in social science discourse tend to be subject to unsystematic variation.”⁷² It is therefore as though reflexivity’s etymology anticipates the divergence of interpretation that is to come.

⁶² For example, see: Erica Burman, “Emotions and reflexivity in feminised education action research,” *Educational Action Research* 14/3 (2006): 315-332, Geoffrey Shacklock and John Smyth, eds., *Being reflexive in critical educational and social research* (London: Falmer, 1998), and Robin Usher, “From Process to Practice: Research, Reflexivity and Writing in Adult Education,” *Studies in Continuing Education* 15/2 (1993): 98-116.

⁶³ Aileen Collier and Mary Wyer, “Researching Reflexively With Patients and Families,” *Qualitative Health Research* 26/7 (2016): 979-993, Dawn Freshwater, “Writing, rigour and reflexivity in nursing research,” *Journal of Research in Nursing* 10/3 (2005): 311-315, Linda Finlay, *Reflexivity: a practical guide for researchers in health and social sciences* (Oxford: Blackwell Science, 2003), and Carolyn Taylor, *Practising Reflexivity in Health and Welfare: Making Knowledge* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2000).

⁶⁴ Malcom Ashmore, *The Reflexive Thesis: Wrioting Sociology of Scientific Knowledge* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 30.

⁶⁵ Ashmore, *The Reflexive Thesis*, 30.

⁶⁶ Ashmore, *The Reflexive Thesis*, 30.

⁶⁷ Ashmore, *The Reflexive Thesis*, 30.

⁶⁸ Ashmore, *The Reflexive Thesis*, 30.

⁶⁹ Ashmore, *The Reflexive Thesis*, 30.

⁷⁰ Ashmore, *The Reflexive Thesis*, 30-31.

⁷¹ Ashmore, *The Reflexive Thesis*, 30-31.

⁷² Ashmore, *The Reflexive Thesis*, 31.

In just the same way as it is pertinent to first understand the etymological heritage of reflexivity before we seek to define, it is also necessary that we examine why reflexivity even developed as a research practice and what societal conditions have led researchers to want to include their own self in the research process. Kim Etherington explains that over the last century there has been a myriad of social and political developments and movements that collectively led to the “growing recognition that even the most objective observers or interpreters brought themselves, and their prior knowledge and personal and cultural histories, into the equation.”⁷³

Etherington cites the rise of feminist research in the 1970s and 80s as being one of the most fundamental reasons for the push to recognise the subjectivity of research.⁷⁴ She notes that the emphasis placed upon equality within feminist research “challenged researchers to make transparent the values and beliefs that lay behind their interpretations, lower[ed] the barrier between researcher and researched, and allow[ed] both sides to be seen and understood for who they were and what influenced them.”⁷⁵ This ultimately meant that “researchers had to take responsibility for their views, using the first person pronoun, ‘I’, thus losing the security of the anonymous third person – ‘the researcher’, or ‘the passive voice that distances subject from object.’”⁷⁶

Etherington then cites the more recent postmodern “‘narrative turn’”⁷⁷ in the social world—an encouragement to situate all research in relation to the era in which it was conducted, thus turning research findings into important “‘stories’”⁷⁸ in the history of human development—as being the leading force behind encouraging modern researchers to see the validity of multiple truths and the situatedness of each truth in a particular setting, as opposed to the more archaic notion of seeking a single universal truth. This emphasis on the gathering of situated “stories” has led to the researcher’s story becoming an acceptable part of

⁷³ Kim Etherington, *Becoming a Reflexive Researcher: Using Our Selves in Research* (London: Jessica Kingsley, 2004), 27.

⁷⁴ Etherington, *Becoming a Reflexive Researcher*, 26.

⁷⁵ Etherington, *Becoming a Reflexive Researcher*, 27.

⁷⁶ Etherington, *Becoming a Reflexive Researcher*, 27.

⁷⁷ Etherington, *Becoming a Reflexive Researcher*, 27.

⁷⁸ Etherington, *Becoming a Reflexive Researcher*, 27.

the research, “thus making transparent the values and beliefs that are held, which almost certainly influence the research process and its outcomes.”⁷⁹ Thus we can see that by making transparent the positionality of the researcher, the power of the researcher is also made transparent. The transparency of power therefore lies at the centre of working reflexively.

Ashmore not only determines a definition of reflexivity and defends its validity as a method of both research and writing, he also describes the fundamental principles that underlie his own understanding and advocacy for the practice, which are rooted in the processes of “self-reference,” “self-awareness,” and a “constitutive circularity of accounts.”⁸⁰ Ashmore clarifies that whilst these three interpretations of reflexivity are “no more mutually exclusive than they are entirely comprehensive,”⁸¹ by describing them separately, they provide the practitioner with a clear understanding of what tasks reflexivity requires. For example, a reflexive researcher must acknowledge that self-referential discourse is not only a necessary practice when researching human beings, but that it also has a manifest impact upon the research being generated owing to the reality that social scientific research is about “humans and their social arrangements... [and] about those humans in those social arrangements who are responsible for the production of social science.”⁸² Similarly, a reflexive researcher must not just “think more deeply about what [they] do,”⁸³ they must accept that there is a “mutually constitutive nature of accounts and reality”⁸⁴ as in order to make sense of an account one must already have an understanding of what reality that account is referring to, thus one must have already made sense of it.

I sought to implement Ashmore’s understanding of reflexivity in this research project by ensuring that self-reference and self-awareness were at the core of how I conducted my research. Additionally, Ashmore’s identification of the constitutive circularity of accounts alerted me to a hermeneutical problem within

⁷⁹ Etherington, *Becoming a Reflexive Researcher*, 27.

⁸⁰ Ashmore, *The Reflexive Thesis*, 32.

⁸¹ Ashmore, *The Reflexive Thesis*, 32.

⁸² Ashmore, *The Reflexive Thesis*, 32.

⁸³ Ashmore, *The Reflexive Thesis*, 32.

⁸⁴ Ashmore, *The Reflexive Thesis*, 32.

reflexivity that I had not previously considered, namely, that in order to make sense of an account of the world, a researcher must first know to what the account refers. However, in order to know this, a researcher must have already made sense of it. Upon first reading this I was dismayed to learn that the practice of reflexivity could be reduced to little more than a self-fulfilling prophecy. However, Dick Pels’s account of circular reasoning, which seeks to sharpen Ashmore’s initial description, enabled me to see that this sort of reasoning is not destructive, but is instead liberating as it “instils a constitutive *weakness* in the heart of all our accounts of the empirical world.”⁸⁵ The strength of the circularity of reasoning that resides within reflexivity lies in accepting that all accounts of the world may be “just another story”⁸⁶ that you can take or leave. It thus disrupts and destabilises our organised understanding of the world and “introduces and (self-) exemplifies a new weaker criterion of truth, which is offered as an alternative to the strong objectivist criterion of mirror-like representational adequacy.”⁸⁷ This is particularly pertinent for this research project, as whilst it focuses upon recounting the worldview of a particular group of men, it also seeks to emphasise that what is being recounted is the truth for these men and that it is not the purpose or right of this project to challenge that truth. Similarly, the inclusion in this thesis of my reflections on how myself has informed and shaped the development of my research and experience of conducting this research are also truths for me.

Further definitions that have also informed my understanding and application of reflexivity are those offered by Etherington, Schön, Pierre Bourdieu, and Michael Lynch. Whilst all four are concerned with reflexivity and the role it plays in the generation and acquisition of new knowledge, the first two can be considered practitioner-based approaches,⁸⁸ whereas the latter are concerned with reflexivity in relation to the academy.

From her dual positionality as a researcher and counsellor, Etherington defines reflexivity “as the capacity of a researcher to acknowledge how their own

⁸⁵ Dick Pels, *Unhastening Science: Autonomy and Reflexivity in the Social Theology of Knowledge* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2002), 164.

⁸⁶ Pels, *Unhastening Science*, 165.

⁸⁷ Pels, *Unhastening Science*, 165.

⁸⁸ Etherington works as a counsellor and Schön worked as a professional consultant.

experiences and contexts (which might be fluid and changing) inform the process and outcomes of inquiry.”⁸⁹ She continues by emphasising that “[i]f we can be aware of how our own thoughts, feelings, culture, environment and social and personal history inform us as we dialogue with participants, transcribe their conversations with us and write our representations of the work, then perhaps we can come close to the rigour that is required of good qualitative research.”⁹⁰ Central to Etherington’s application of reflexivity, however, is the role it can play in closing the “illusory” gap between the researcher and the researched and that by doing this, “we encourage a sense of power, involvement and agency”⁹¹ in the researched. Reflexivity’s ability to redistribute power is also essential to my own understanding of the practice.

Schön’s practice-based examination significantly influenced how I applied reflexivity when out in the field (because of his emphasis on bringing reflexivity into the day-to-day activities of professionals). After providing a series of scenarios where four sets of professionals⁹² develop solutions to situations where they are “confronted with demands that seem incompatible or inconsistent”⁹³ to their professional roles, Schön argues that they were able to devise such solutions by applying “reflection-in-action.”⁹⁴ Schön continues by noting that in each scenario the professional allows him or herself “to experience surprise, puzzlement, or confusion in a situation which he finds uncertain or unique. He reflects on the phenomena before him, and on the prior understandings which have been implicit in his behavior. He carries out an experiment which serves to generate both a new understanding of the phenomena and a change in the situation.”⁹⁵ Reflection-in-action therefore relies upon a professional simultaneously drawing upon the skills and expertise they have amassed throughout their career (or “repertoire”)⁹⁶ and the context and reality in which the particular unexpected phenomena at hand is

⁸⁹ Etherington, *Becoming a Reflexive Researcher*, 31-32.

⁹⁰ Etherington, *Becoming a Reflexive Researcher*, 32.

⁹¹ Etherington, *Becoming a Reflexive Researcher*, 32.

⁹² Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner*, 63-68

⁹³ Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner*, 63.

⁹⁴ Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner*, 63.

⁹⁵ Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner*, 68.

⁹⁶ Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner*, 138.

occurring in order to arrive at a solution. By bringing together the expected and unexpected, the professional becomes a “researcher in the practice context”⁹⁷ and is able to construct a new theory or practice relevant to the case at hand. I found this understanding of reflexivity as a method that a practitioner can employ to help devise a solution to a problem when out in the field particularly helpful owing to the instability of the field in which I was working.

In contrast to this, Bourdieu’s analysis of reflexivity has aided me in understanding how my reflexivity relates to my positionality within the academy.⁹⁸ For Bourdieu, reflexivity is a means by which researchers can bring to the fore and analyse their inherent biases, with emphasis on biases relating to their theoretical and/or intellectual predispositions. The aim of this process is to unravel how these biases have subsequently influenced and shaped the way a researcher approaches the world they seek to observe. Central to Bourdieu’s understanding of bias, however, is class. A researcher’s class and the power that is afforded to them by their class status significantly shapes the biases that they hold and thus the development of their research. However, underpinning this relatively mainstay understanding of reflexivity are two unique components: firstly, that reflexivity should be a collective endeavour; and secondly, that reflexivity should be non-narcissistic.

Bourdieu argues that reflexivity is the process of doing a “sociology of sociology”⁹⁹ and that it “is a fundamental dimension of sociological epistemology”¹⁰⁰ that should be embarked upon as a collective effort by all social scientists. Central to Bourdieu’s definition of reflexivity is therefore the notion that

⁹⁷ Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner*, 68.

⁹⁸ For me, this meant unpacking how my context as a working-class woman (an identification that has become my master status) impacts and shapes both my research and my experience of the academy. Later in this chapter, I will engage with the work of Beverley Skeggs, who uses Bourdieu’s theory of class distinction to focus more closely on how class and gender-constructs impact the lives of women. Skeggs’s work has significantly enhanced my own thinking about how my research is impacted by both my class and gender, as well as how reflexivity can be employed to utilise my multiplicitous positionality as a research resource.

⁹⁹ Pierre Bourdieu, “The Purpose of Reflexive Sociology,” in *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, eds. Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc J. D. Wacquant (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 61-216 (68).

¹⁰⁰ Bourdieu, “The Purpose of Reflexive Sociology,” 68.

reflexivity should be beneficial to the whole academy and that its primary focus should be upon making transparent the biases that underlie research.

Bourdieu laments the fact that, at the time of his writing, the vast majority of researchers working in the field of sociology desire to objectivise the world they observe, yet fail to objectivise themselves or to bring under scrutiny their personal biases that shape the way they view the world. Bourdieu therefore advocates that the researcher “objectivize[s] the objectivizing point of view.”¹⁰¹ However, this process should be more than merely “pointing to – and bemoaning – his class background and location,”¹⁰² it should include a direct and challenging reflection upon “the invisible determinations inherent in the intellectual posture itself, in the scholarly gaze that he or she casts upon the social world.”¹⁰³ For Bourdieu, it is not only the biographical idiosyncrasies of the researcher that must be objectivised, but also the biases that develop as a result of the researcher being located within the academy or within a specific discipline. It is therefore the intellectual biases of the researcher that Bourdieu is concerned about making transparent. However, it is not enough for a researcher to merely make note of this bias; they must work to unpick what has led to the construction of this reality.¹⁰⁴ Bourdieu argues that it is only through a “collectively mastered and collectively utilized”¹⁰⁵ reflexivity that scientific autonomy can be achieved.¹⁰⁶ The transparency that reflexively provides is therefore collectively beneficial as it will help to free research from the constraints of power.

It is essential for Bourdieu that this act of making biases, and thus power, transparent is not a narcissistic one. Bourdieu asserts that “the sociology of sociology I argue for has little in common with a complacent and intimist return to the private *person* of the sociologist or with a search for the intellectual *Zeitgeist*

¹⁰¹ Bourdieu, “The Purpose of Reflexive Sociology,” 69.

¹⁰² Bourdieu, “The Purpose of Reflexive Sociology,” 69.

¹⁰³ Bourdieu, “The Purpose of Reflexive Sociology,” 69.

¹⁰⁴ Bourdieu, “The Purpose of Reflexive Sociology,” 73.

¹⁰⁵ Bourdieu, “The Purpose of Reflexive Sociology,” 182.

¹⁰⁶ Bourdieu, “The Purpose of Reflexive Sociology,” 183-188.

that animates his or her work."¹⁰⁷ Bourdieu therefore seeks to distance himself from researchers that "have turned to talking about themselves."¹⁰⁸

Bourdieu's reflexivity can be reduced to the following four central elements:

1. At its core is the questioning of privileged access to knowledge and the role class plays in the academy;¹⁰⁹
2. It situates the researcher within a particular social space in the hope that through being aware of their situatedness, they are able to break down the constraints that bind them;¹¹⁰
3. It acknowledges that social conditions (e.g. class) have influenced the production of knowledge;¹¹¹
4. It is fundamentally a process of self-analysis and is the only means through which a researcher can produce a rigorous understanding of both him/herself and the social world that surrounds them.¹¹²

It is Bourdieu's emphasis on transparency (much like Etherington's) that lies at the heart of my own understanding of reflexivity. By using the practice, I hope to make transparent the following: my own positionality, biases, and experiences; my connection to the context that is the focus of this study; how these realities have informed or shaped my research; and how these realities have themselves been informed or shaped by the conditions of wider society.

Lynch's definition of reflexivity asserts that we must first be aware of the fact that there are multiple "reflexivities"¹¹³ and that reflexivity can mean different things in different contexts. Noting that he too is indebted to Ashmore's work on reflexivity, Lynch defines six different types of reflexivity: "mechanical,"¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁷ Bourdieu, "The Purpose of Reflexive Sociology," 72.

¹⁰⁸ Bourdieu, "The Purpose of Reflexive Sociology," 72.

¹⁰⁹ Bourdieu, "The Purpose of Reflexive Sociology," 214.

¹¹⁰ Bourdieu, "The Purpose of Reflexive Sociology," 214.

¹¹¹ Bourdieu, "The Purpose of Reflexive Sociology," 214.

¹¹² Bourdieu, "The Purpose of Reflexive Sociology," 215.

¹¹³ Michael Lynch, "Against Reflexivity as an Academic Virtue and Source of Privileged Knowledge," *Theory, Culture & Society* 17/3 (2000): 26-54 (27).

¹¹⁴ Lynch, "Against Reflexivity as an Academic Virtue and Source of Privileged Knowledge," 27-28.

"substantive,"¹¹⁵ "methodological,"¹¹⁶ "metatheoretical,"¹¹⁷ "interpretative,"¹¹⁸ and "ethnomethodological."¹¹⁹ Although Lynch's inventory of reflexivities highlights that there exists many different (albeit often overlapping) types of reflexivity that have different underlying philosophies and agendas, he emphasises that all forms of reflexivity rely on "some sort of recursive turning back"¹²⁰ and that they almost all invariably appeal to a number of notions that Lynch argues are false, for example, that reflexivity automatically provides a researcher with insights that are deep and meaningful,¹²¹ or that a researcher can actively choose to be reflexive. Lynch therefore argues that "'reflexivity' is not an epistemological, moral or political virtue. It is an unavoidable feature of the way actions (including actions performed, and expressions written, by academic researchers) are performed, made sense of and incorporated into social settings. In this sense of the word, it is impossible to be unreflexive."¹²²

Stating that one can choose to work reflexively is therefore a fallacy, as this presupposes that there is an alternative way of working, which Lynch stresses is simply not true. As a consequence of this, it is therefore also a fallacy to assert that working in a reflexive manner gives one access to richer, more profound data. Lynch justifies this by arguing, "I recommend this limited notion of reflexivity for the simple reason that it avoids the academic pretensions and fractiousness that can arise from equating reflexivity with a particular intellectual orientation, cultural

¹¹⁵ Lynch, "Against Reflexivity as an Academic Virtue and Source of Privileged Knowledge," 28-29.

¹¹⁶ Lynch, "Against Reflexivity as an Academic Virtue and Source of Privileged Knowledge," 29-30.

¹¹⁷ Lynch, "Against Reflexivity as an Academic Virtue and Source of Privileged Knowledge," 30-32.

¹¹⁸ Lynch, "Against Reflexivity as an Academic Virtue and Source of Privileged Knowledge," 32-33.

¹¹⁹ Lynch, "Against Reflexivity as an Academic Virtue and Source of Privileged Knowledge," 33-34.

¹²⁰ Lynch, "Against Reflexivity as an Academic Virtue and Source of Privileged Knowledge," 34

¹²¹ Lynch's assertion that reflexivity may, in fact, lead to "tedious, pretentious and unrevealing" academic accounts will be addressed shortly when I attend to the criticisms that have been made of reflexivity. Lynch, "Against Reflexivity as an Academic Virtue and Source of Privileged Knowledge," 47.

¹²² Lynch, "Against Reflexivity as an Academic Virtue and Source of Privileged Knowledge," 26-27.

condition or political position."¹²³ Therefore, whilst I have identified that I am consciously trying to work in a reflexive manner, I also accept Lynch's contention that working reflexively is, in fact, the only possible way of working and that all researchers work reflexively even if they do not readily realise it. Similarly, whilst I agree with Lynch's claim that reflexivity needs to be demystified and that it is false to assume that its product will always be data of immense and incomparable value, depth, and profundity, it does not detract from the fact that, at the very least, reflexivity enables a researcher to do a conscious double-take of their research and to interrogate it from multiple angles.

In this research, then, reflexivity is understood as a process that encourages the researcher to stop and think about each stage of their research, their positionality in relation to their research, their chosen research methods and practices, and their research findings. Therefore, whilst Lynch may be correct in his assertion that reflexivity does not automatically result in the acquisition of "better" knowledge, by encouraging a researcher to continuously reconsider how they are generating and using knowledge reflexivity may provide a researcher with an opportunity to enhance their research.

Self-observation, self-awareness, self-narration, and the recognition that we are all situated beings who exist as embodied products of the cultures and contexts that surround us are central to how I have utilised myself and reflexivity in this research project. I have consequently endeavoured to weave my own life story into my wider research findings, not only draw to on the additional data set my experiences provide me with, but to also be transparent about the manner in which I have conducted this research, including my own biases, and my relationship with/to the life stories and contexts of this research project's participants. My research therefore embraces the notion that in order to understand and articulate what is "outside," one must also understand and articulate what is "inside" and that a researcher must first understand their own self before they can understand their research.

¹²³ Lynch, "Against Reflexivity as an Academic Virtue and Source of Privileged Knowledge," 27.

Critiquing Reflexivity

Whilst I am convinced that the only effects of adopting a reflexive working practice are beneficial ones, it would be remiss of me if I were to forego engaging with the most common criticisms that are made of it. These are:

1. It cannot be defined or confined by distinct criteria, nor can it be policed either conceptually or methodologically;
2. It is false to assume that being reflexive automatically leads to deep, meaningful, or insightful research;
3. It is too subjective, places too greater emphasis on the individual, and has the potential to fall into the realms of narcissism and pretentiousness;
4. Its proclivity for relativism leads to self-refutation and redundancy.

This subchapter is thus devoted to unpacking these statements. Alan Bleakley warns that reflexivity “is in danger of becoming a catch-all title for an ill-defined process”¹²⁴ as different researchers both frame and apply reflexivity in vastly different ways, often resulting in completely different aspects and dimensions of the concept being emphasised. Bleakley reminds us that there is an inherent lack of conceptual and methodological clarity in both the concept and practice of reflexivity and that those seeking to use the approach should recognise and address this in their usage. Similarly, Max van Manen also raises concerns by stressing that whilst it may seem that the term is being employed in a consistent and straightforward manner, it may in fact be being used to refer to an infinite number of distinctly different methods, practices, and concepts.¹²⁵ Ashmore also

¹²⁴ Alan Bleakley, “From Reflective Practice to Holistic Reflexivity,” *Studies in Higher Education* 24/3 (1999): 315-330 (317).

¹²⁵ See: Max van Manen, “On the Epistemology of Reflective Practice,” *Teachers and Teaching* 1/1 (1995): 33-50.

emphasises the multiplicitous nature of reflexivity when citing Hugh Mehan and Houston Woods' observation that "[t]here could be infinite sayings about reflexivity, and still reflexivity would not be captured. Reflexivity will exhaust us long before we exhaust it."¹²⁶ It is therefore necessary that when first adopting a reflexive working practice, a researcher frames their reflexivity by making explicit what extant examinations of the practice have informed their own understanding.

A further criticism is offered by Lynch when he challenges the supposedly illuminating character of reflexivity. Lynch argues that just as with all research methods, reflexivity may also uncover data that is not particularly insightful or enlightening and that it is false to assume that it will always result in profound data. This does not, however, make the practice a redundant one.¹²⁷ To the contrary, Lynch's pragmatic and no-nonsense assessment of reflexivity seeks to highlight that by attributing an ethereal or mystical illuminating quality to reflexivity, we may be limiting its authority and validity. For example, Lynch argues that "[i]f reflexivity shines for nobody in particular and its illumination is controlled by no special theory, method or subject position, it loses its metaphysical aura and becomes ordinary,"¹²⁸ and it is through making reflexivity ordinary that Lynch is able to declare that all research is, in fact, reflexive, which then strengthens the validity of reflexivity (as everyone is already doing it).

When focusing on the promise, pitfalls, and advancement of the constitutive circularity of reflexivity, Pels emphasises the potential "viscous"¹²⁹ nature of reflexivity. Pels asserts that "[t]he show of 'honesty', 'bravery', 'self-evidence' and 'non-contradiction' which often frames such reflexive duplications easily conceals the delicate blackmail which is involved in applying one's own analytical framework at once to oneself and to one's adversaries."¹³⁰ For Pels, "[t]he imperative to become self-aware thus becomes a policing demand"¹³¹ thereby making reflexivity

¹²⁶ Ashmore, *The Reflexive Thesis*, 26.

¹²⁷ Lynch, "Against Reflexivity as an Academic Virtue and Source of Privileged Knowledge," 46-48.

¹²⁸ Lynch, "Against Reflexivity as an Academic Virtue and Source of Privileged Knowledge," 48.

¹²⁹ Dick Pels, "Reflexivity: One Step Up," *Theory, Culture & Society* 17/3 (2000): 1-25.

¹³⁰ Pels, "Reflexivity: One Step Up," 8.

¹³¹ Pels, "Reflexivity: One Step Up," 9.

no better than traditional ideological criticism as it becomes just another means of dismissing and disregarding alternative research methods.

Additionally, Roger Trigg (when reviewing David Bloor's *Knowledge and Social Imagery*¹³²) argues that reflexivity's relativist nature means that it has the potential to be internally and externally self-refuting and self-destroying. Thus, the knowledge generated via reflexivity could be considered of little consequence or use as no researcher can claim objective authority. For example, Trigg asserts "[g]ranted that some sociologists choose to see beliefs as socially conditioned; it follows that if they are correct, their own views are also socially conditioned and thus on a par with the beliefs of every other community. There is no reason why their beliefs should command our assent."¹³³ Trigg continues by arguing that without any notion of objectivity, an attitude of "their views are their views, and ours ours"¹³⁴ is likely to consume research resulting in a situation whereby there is "little point in any rational consideration and comparison of each other's position, even if such a thing were possible. Why bother to re-examine one's own beliefs or investigate others' positions, if there is no sense in which we or they could be mistaken anyway?"¹³⁵ However, as we have already seen in Pels's analysis of the circularity of accounts present within reflexivity, this reality may serve to be redemptive and liberating.

When considered in light of these criticisms, it may seem as though reflexivity is little more than an imprecise, unscientific, and potentially dangerous method of researching and writing that can be (and is) wantonly and pretentiously applied. We are left in position whereby both the concept and practice of reflexivity remain not only elusive and open to multiple interpretations, but where its usage may merely be to legitimise the supposed authority of the researcher and the specific truth of their research. However, all is not lost. Wanda Pillow, when examining the problematic and potentially catastrophic nature of reflexivity, asserts that "vigilance" is the potential answer to reflexivity's problems.

¹³² David Bloor, *Knowledge and Social Imagery* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

¹³³ Roger Trigg, "The Sociology of Knowledge," *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 8 (1978): 289-298.

¹³⁴ Trigg, "The Sociology of Knowledge," 292.

¹³⁵ Trigg, "The Sociology of Knowledge," 292.

Pillow does not dismiss reflexivity because of its potential problems, but encourages researchers to be “vigilant” of such problems. She asserts that “[t]his vigilance from within can aid in a rethinking and questioning of the assumptive knowledges embedded in reflexive practices in ethnographic and qualitative research and work not to situate reflexivity as a confessional act, a cure for what ails us, or a practice that renders familiarity, but rather to situate practices of reflexivity as critical to exposing the difficult and often uncomfortable task of leaving what is unfamiliar, unfamiliar.”¹³⁶ Pillow therefore invites researchers to consider properly what they mean by reflexivity and what practices this entails. For Pillow, the ultimate goal of reflexivity is not to better represent people, thus “reinstitut[ing] and reproduc[ing] exactly the hegemonic structures many of us are working against,”¹³⁷ but to push towards an “unfamiliar”¹³⁸ or “uncomfortable”¹³⁹ discourse that enables the better acknowledgment of the struggles of many for self-representation.¹⁴⁰ For Pillow, then, the acknowledgement and transparency of power is key to effectively applying a vigilant reflexive working practice. As my research focuses on a cultural context that has suffered at the hands of misrepresentation (as I will demonstrate in chapter four), Pillow’s fusion of vigilance, reflexivity, and representation has become central to my own reflexivity.

Similarly, Mats Alvesson, Cynthia Hardy, and Bill Harley argue that researchers should not “mystify”¹⁴¹ reflexivity and that if we accept that “knowledge more generally is a product of linguistic, political, and institutional influences”, we must also accept that “so too is reflexivity”¹⁴² and that as reflexivity develops, it warrants more detailed critical attention to the external factors that impact upon it. Alvesson et al. have said:

¹³⁶ Wanda Pillow, “Confession, Catharsis, or Cure? Rethinking the uses of Reflexivity as Methodological Power in Qualitative Research,” *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 16/2 (2003): 175-196 (177).

¹³⁷ Pillow, “Confession, Catharsis, or Culture,” 192.

¹³⁸ Pillow, “Confession, Catharsis, or Culture,” 192.

¹³⁹ Pillow, “Confession, Catharsis, or Culture,” 192.

¹⁴⁰ Pillow, “Confession, Catharsis, or Culture,” 193.

¹⁴¹ Mats Alvesson, Cynthia Hardy, and Bill Harley, “Reflecting on Reflexivity: Reflexive Textual Practices in Organization and Management Theory,” *Journal of Management Studies* 45/3 (2008): 480-501 (496).

¹⁴² Alvesson, et al., “Reflecting on Reflexivity: Reflexive Textual Practices in Organization and Management Theory,” 496.

[R]eflexivity is important to the understanding of what happens in research [as it] means thinking through what one is doing to encourage insights about the nature of social science and, especially, the role that language, power/ knowledge connections, social interests and ideologies, rhetorical moves and manoeuvring in the socio political field play in producing particular accounts. It may also inspire creativity through opening up for new perspectives and providing reference points for what one is doing and to avoid or minimize certain ‘harmful’ aspects of research that follow from lack of reflexivity.¹⁴³

The central element of my own understanding and implementation of reflexivity is therefore transparency. I have sought to use reflexivity to be transparent about every aspect of both myself and my research, from my socio-cultural heritage, upbringing, and background, to my motivations for conducting this research, the challenges and dilemmas I have faced whilst doing so, and my position in both the community and the academy, and everything else in-between.

Reflexivity and Contextual Bible Study

Choosing to work reflexively whilst researching CBS is no coincidence, as through its emphasis on “praxis,”¹⁴⁴ a process described by West and the Ujamaa Centre as a constant “cycle of action and reflection,”¹⁴⁵ CBS *relies upon* reflexivity. In West’s and the Ujamaa Centre’s CBS manual, both the methodology of CBS and the manual itself are described as products of many years of “praxis” and that this approach should always be adopted when using CBS to ensure that all CBS programmes are continually (re-)assessed and (re-)addressed as they progress. This ensures that

¹⁴³ Alvesson, et al., “Reflecting on Reflexivity: Reflexive Textual Practices in Organization and Management Theory,” 497.

¹⁴⁴ Gerald O. West and the Ujamaa Centre for Biblical and Theological Community Development and Research, *Doing Contextual Bible Study: A Resource Manual* (Pietermaritzburg: The Ujamaa Centre for Biblical and Theological Community Development and Research, 2014). http://ujamaa.ukzn.ac.za/Libraries/manuals/Ujamaa_CBS_bible_study_Manual_part_1_2.sflb.ashx, 3.

¹⁴⁵ West and the Ujamaa Centre, *Doing Contextual Bible Study*, 3.

every CBS programme develops in response to each programmes’ participants as the facilitator is thinking reflexively about the way the programme is progressing. Reflexivity therefore safeguards against a programme diverging away from what is most appropriate and effective for the participants. The manual frames this emphasis on continuous reflection and revision as a method that is central to the overall development of the CBS process, as it is only by learning from the experiences of those that are facilitating and participating in CBS programmes that the overall method of CBS can be enhanced. Reflexivity is thus central to this process.

In addition to placing emphasis on the reflexive process of “praxis,” the manual also stresses that the best way in which a person can develop their expertise in CBS is through “learning by doing”¹⁴⁶ and reflection. The manual also encourage its users to “make these Bible studies your own, [and to] be flexible in your use of them, adapt them for your own context, and construct others like these that will also meet the needs of your context,”¹⁴⁷ as well as stressing the need for CBS users to think reflexively about the context in which they are using CBS. For example:

The methods used here come from our understanding of our context, and as you proceed through this Manual you will have to decide whether these methods are of use to your context or not. Contextual Bible Study is a **methodology** – a way of working, rather than a fixed formula.¹⁴⁸

The manual thus demonstrates that reflexivity is an integral part of each stage of CBS, from its inception and design, to its final evaluation. Therefore, whilst the manual describes CBS as a distinct methodology, it also places equal emphasis on its methodological flexibility and the need for CBS practitioners to utilise reflexivity consciously and continuously to contextualise CBS for the unique group they are working with.

¹⁴⁶ West and the Ujamaa Centre, *Doing Contextual Bible Study*, 3.

¹⁴⁷ West and the Ujamaa Centre, *Doing Contextual Bible Study*, 3.

¹⁴⁸ West and the Ujamaa Centre, *Doing Contextual Bible Study*, 3.

This notion of reflexivity being central to CBS has also been demonstrated visually. For example, the cover of the CBS manual features a photograph of a bronze-cast humanoid figure that they describe as being representative of the reflexive process of “praxis.”¹⁴⁹ Similarly, Musa W. Dube, in her introduction to the edited volume *Postcolonial Perspectives in African Biblical Interpretation*, explains that the cover of this volume features two adinkra symbols from Ghana that mean “go back and take it” and “the tree of God.”¹⁵⁰ She explains that these symbols visually represent the overall purpose of both the volume and African biblical scholarship, both of which rely upon reflexivity.

My desire to focus this research on the development of CBS therefore sat neatly with my decision to work reflexively, as reflexivity is part and parcel of CBS.

Acknowledging my Vulnerability and Insider/Outsider Status

The fact that this research project depicts, records, and analyses the tangible, embodied, and lived realities of a group of real people drove my desire to want to work reflexively. It was therefore essential that as this research project’s findings are first and foremost the product of my interactions with real people that the person behind the research doing the interacting (i.e. me) must also be presented as a real person. Reflexivity therefore provided me with the tools to do this. This commitment was then enhanced by my strong personal connection to my research.

Whilst this connection invariably made many aspects of my research easier to conduct (for example, gaining access to both “gate keepers” and participants), it also created a great deal of problems. One particular problem that arose was my constant grappling with the issues of representation,¹⁵¹ authenticity, and

¹⁴⁹ West and the Ujamaa Centre, *Doing Contextual Bible Study*, front cover.

¹⁵⁰ Musa W. Dube, “Introduction: The Scramble for Africa as the Biblical Studies Scramble for Africa: Postcolonial Perspectives,” in *Postcolonial Perspectives in African Biblical Interpretation*, eds. Musa W. Dube, Andrew M. Mbuvi, and Dora R. Mbuwayesango (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012), 1-26 (6-7).

¹⁵¹ The notion of “representation” will be examined in greater depth momentarily.

responsibility. Whilst I know these concerns are regularly wrestled with by all (ethical) researchers studying the social world, this did not make managing them any easier.

I found solace, however, in the fact that such issues keep even well-established and globally renowned researchers awake at night. For example, Ruth Behar, when reflecting upon the roles of the researcher and the researched and the relationship that develops between them, highlights the necessity for anthropologists to acknowledge their heavy reliance upon making individuals “vulnerable” and that managing “vulnerability” is central to negotiating many of the dilemmas researchers experience with regards to their relationship with/to their research participants. Behar directly questions what right she has as a researcher to willingly and wantonly demand access to the vulnerability of others without first opening herself up as vulnerable. For example, Behar asks “[w]ho is this woman who is writing about others, making others vulnerable? What do the others want from her? ... What kind of fulfilment does she get – or not get – from the power she has? ... What, as she blithely goes about the privilege of doing research, is the story she isn’t willing to tell?”¹⁵² Behar proposes that the solution to such provocative questions may be in encouraging researchers to conduct and write their research vulnerably and that one method that can be employed to achieve this is to interweave their own life stories with the life stories of those they seek to research.¹⁵³ My implementation of reflexivity therefore sought to incorporate this need for reciprocal vulnerability.

During this process of becoming vulnerable and thinking reflexively about my own situatedness, it became clear that my role as a researcher—both in relation to this research project and to the academy—was dominated by a multiplicitous and precarious insider/outsider positionality. This positionality operated on a multitude of levels as I was not only both an insider and outsider in relation to the participants—I am a member of a coal-mining community but I am not a coal miner—but I also hold an insider/outsider status within the academy owing to my

¹⁵² Ruth Behar, *The Vulnerable Observer: Anthropology that Breaks your Heart* (Boston: Beacon, 1996), 20.

¹⁵³ See: Behar, *The Vulnerable Observer*, 19-21

gender and working-class background. Because my own social position was integral to my research, there was a "constant tug of war between concepts of 'inside' and 'outside'"¹⁵⁴ during this research project.

Before I unpack the layers of my insider/outsider positionality, I will first define what I mean by "insider" and "outsider." The definition of "insider researcher" used within my research is based upon whether or not a researcher considers themselves, and is considered by others, to be a member of the socio-cultural community or group they intend to study. For example, "[i]nsider research is that which is conducted within a social group, organization or culture of which the researcher is also a member."¹⁵⁵ An "insider" is therefore someone who both self-identifies and is identified by others as belonging to or being a member of a specific community. Typically, a member refers to this community as being their "home" or a community in which they are a "native." Belonging to the community under study often enables an insider researcher to be more instinctively and unquestioningly privy to the ways of thinking, doing, and being that are unique to said community.

An "outsider" is someone who does not self-identify and is not identified by others as belonging to a certain community and thus does not have an existing understanding of, or ready access to, the unique knowledge possessed by such communities.¹⁵⁶ In light of this definition, I will now unpack my own insider/outsider status, first in relation to those that participated in this project and second, in relation to my position in the academy.

¹⁵⁴ Lisa McKenzie, *Getting By: Estates, Class and Culture in Austerity Britain* (Bristol: Polity Press, 2015), 4.

¹⁵⁵ Melanie J. Greene, "On the Inside Looking In: Methodological Insights and Challenges in Conducting Qualitative Insider Research," *The Qualitative Report* 19/15 (2014): 1-13 (1).

¹⁵⁶ I am aware that this definition of insider/outsider status is not definitive nor without problems and that boundaries of status are not always fixed and can be changeable, "fluid, and open to negotiation and occasional challenge," but such a definition will suffice for the purposes of this project. See: Temitope Oriola and Kevin D. Haggerty, "The Ambivalent Insider/Outsider Status of Academic 'Homecomers': Observations on Identity and Field Research in the Niger Delta," *Sociology* 46/3 (2012): 540-548 (546); and, Graham P. Crow, Graham A. Allan, and Marcia Summers, "Changing perspectives on the Insider/Outsider Distinction in Community Sociology," *Community, Work & Family* 4/1 (2010): 29-48.

My Insider/Outsider Status in Relation to this Study’s Participants

This insider/outsider status was in fact the most straightforward to manage during this project, as the boundaries of each status were relatively clear and fixed. For example, I was an insider because of the following:

1. I am the daughter of a coal miner;
2. I grew up in a coal-mining community in South Derbyshire;
3. During my upbringing, I was surrounded by coal miners (as all the families with whom my family were close friends were also coal-mining families);
4. I can easily trace my family’s employment in South Derbyshire’s coal-mining industry for at least six generations;
5. I still live in South Derbyshire, a stone’s throw away from the sites of several once prominent South Derbyshire collieries where the men in my family were employed;
6. I am highly knowledgeable and have first-hand experience of what it means to belong to a coal-mining community and the impact that the vocation of coal mining has upon coal miners, their families, and the wider community.

These realities had a distinct and profound impact on my ability to establish myself as an insider member of South Derbyshire’s coal-mining community. This was not only an essential part of the premise of this research, but more importantly, it played a significant role in establishing how the group I sought to study viewed both me and my research. By using my insider positionality as the starting point for every encounter with potential participants and by making my coal-mining heritage overtly visible, I was able to repeatedly demonstrate that this research was being conducted by someone who has coal mining embedded in their personal history, therefore immediately identifying myself as someone who is not only connected to the context being studied, but who also cares deeply about the

future of this context. This then had a significant positive impact on the following: the access I had to "gatekeepers," group members, and insider knowledge; the rapport I was able to build with research participants (particularly in relation to having little effect on the flow of social interaction); the establishment of intimacy with participants (which promoted trust and truth telling); and the way in which I assessed and analysed the data generated. Just as Melanie J. Greene highlights, the most overt positives of my insider status were enhanced "knowledge,"¹⁵⁷ "interaction,"¹⁵⁸ and "access."¹⁵⁹

The transparency with which I both approached and presented my insider status therefore provided me with the following:

1. A wealth of established, almost innate, knowledge (which would take an outsider a long time to acquire);
2. A deeper, more comprehensive and considered understanding of the way in which group members understand and interpret their social world (thus enhancing my ability to analyse how they have read and interpreted the biblical texts offered in the CBS programme);
3. Being thoroughly aware of the history, politics, and realities of not only the British coal-mining industry, but also more specifically coal mining in South Derbyshire and the collieries in which the participants were employed. I am therefore aware of how the industry "really works."

However, whilst these attributes marked me as an insider, I was just as clearly marked as an outsider by my gender, youth, and the fact that I am not a coal miner. Therefore, when I state that the coal-miners' context is also my context, I am seeking to appeal to the distinct overlap in our contexts, as we share a great deal of social, economic, and cultural experiences. However, I am also aware of the fact that central to their context is their vocation as coal miners, a significant aspect that I cannot share in. Consequently, whilst no two individuals can claim to share the

¹⁵⁷ Greene, "On the Inside Looking In," 3.

¹⁵⁸ Greene, "On the Inside Looking In," 3-4.

¹⁵⁹ Greene, "On the Inside Looking In," 4.

same context, a person can embody multiple contexts, some of which overlap and can be shared with others.

I was also marked as an outsider by my role as a postgraduate researcher, a status that was further complicated by being an "academic homecomer."¹⁶⁰ However, during this research, my outsider role as a researcher did not negatively impact my insider role, as I presented and embodied my insider status so strongly that any potential conflict with my outsider status was negated. For example, I did not struggle at the beginning of my project to decide how I should position myself during this research project (as other researchers might do),¹⁶¹ as I immediately knew what I wanted to portray as my master status. From the very beginning, I have always described myself as a working-class researcher, not a researcher who is working-class, or a researcher simply interested in the working-class. Therefore, I always present myself as an out-and-proud working-class woman who's the daughter of a South Derbyshire coal miner. When working with this study's participants, this attitude was entirely beneficial.¹⁶²

I also managed to avoid any potential conflict of statuses when out in the field by being candid about what knowledge I both possessed and lacked, thus I always sought to emphasise that I saw the participants as experts in their own lives and that I was reliant upon their undeniable insider status in this industry/culture for the requisite knowledge needed for this project. I therefore engendered an atmosphere wherein the coal miners were acknowledged as my research partners and as equal to, if not even more important than, myself in the construction of the knowledge upon which this project is based. I did not present myself as an expert and sought to emphasise that they were the experts from whom I wished to learn. My outsider status therefore reduced as the project progressed as I became more knowledgeable about coal-mining culture.

¹⁶⁰ A term used to describe one who returns to their home community to conduct research. See: Oriola and Haggerty, "The Ambivalent Insider/Outsider Status of Academic 'Homecomers,'" 541.

¹⁶¹ See: Oriola and Haggerty, "The Ambivalent Insider/Outsider Status of Academic 'Homecomers.'"

¹⁶² As by being overt about our shared culture, I was able to establish both a rapport and trust with participants quickly and smoothly.

My Insider/Outsider Status in the Academy

The insider/outsider status that I found the most difficult to manage during this project was, however, that of being an insider/outsider in the academy. It is the “hybridity”¹⁶³ of my position as a working-class researcher that has not just had an impact on the development of my research, but also on my personal wellbeing.

Just as I always presented myself as a working-class woman to those participating in my research, so too did I never attempt to hide my class identity when in the academy (as other working-class researchers might do.)¹⁶⁴ In terms of my class, I am therefore a “Loyalist”¹⁶⁵ (as opposed to a “Renegade”¹⁶⁶ or “Double Agent”¹⁶⁷), which is echoed by my research as it overtly seeks to “stress the importance of ‘finding home/roots/community.’”¹⁶⁸

However, being an out-and-proud working-class woman in the academy has not been an easy road to tread, primarily because many working-class practices and traits are still often considered unworthy of taking pride in and of little value. My position in the academy has therefore caused me to struggle with my working-class status in two distinct ways: 1. It has challenged why I think working-class culture is something to be celebrated; 2. It has led to me feeling I will never fit into the academy.

My struggle with articulating why I believe working-class culture is something to be celebrated has developed as a product of my increased exposure to the way in which Britain’s working-class have previously been studied or discussed. As Danny Dorling’s foreword to Lisa McKenzie’s *Getting By* explains, “[a]

¹⁶³ Lucey, Melody, and Walkerdine, “Uneasy Hybrids,” 238.

¹⁶⁴ See: Allison L. Hurst, “A Healing Echo: Methodological Reflections of a Working-Class Researcher on Class,” *The Qualitative Report* 13/3/2 (2008): 334-352 (336).

¹⁶⁵ Hurst, “A Healing Echo,” 338.

¹⁶⁶ A student or scholar that rejects their working-class heritage and strives to be seen as middle-class. See: Hurst, “A Healing Echo,” 338.

¹⁶⁷ A student or scholar that refuses to take sides in academia and tries to have a foot in both camps. See: Hurst, “A Healing Echo,” 338-339.

¹⁶⁸ Hurst, “A Healing Echo,” 338.

century ago almost all accounts of the poor were written by the rich and often for the rich,”¹⁶⁹ which has resulted in many of the accounts of the working-class being dominated by the views of the middle-class. McKenzie (who is also the daughter of a coal miner) elaborates on this point by describing her experience of first reading George Orwell’s *Road to Wigan Pier*:

Reading George Orwell as a 16-year-old working-class girl living in a mining community during the 1984 miners’ strike was difficult. I didn’t pick that book up again until 2001 when I went to university. Orwell’s depiction of working-class life during the 1930s was upsetting; this was the time of my grandparents who had raised me until I was six years old, and whom I dearly loved. The knowledge that ‘others’ had been taught that [the working-class] smelt and were dirty was very painful, and led me to think about how we were known and thought of in 1984.¹⁷⁰

McKenzie’s autobiographical reflection alerts us to the fact that the working-class have long been viewed by the rest of society as dirty, smelly, slobbish, vulgar, and uneducated and that “[t]he negative valuing of working-class practices [has become] reified, and negative meanings are attached to everything deemed to be working class.”¹⁷¹ Just like McKenzie, I was surprised to find that “‘others’ did not think the same”¹⁷² as me about the joy and value of working-class culture and just like Skeggs (who also comes from a working-class background), the moment I set foot in the academy, the class I took such pride in was “delegitimated”¹⁷³ to “common”¹⁷⁴ and “without much cultural value.”¹⁷⁵

In addition to this, the working-class have regularly been blamed for being responsible for the undesirable aspects of Britain, as well as being the target of innumerable policies to “better” Britain. For example, it is as though “[w]idening

¹⁶⁹ Danny Dorling, “Foreword,” in *Getting By: Estates, Class and Culture in Austerity Britain*, Lisa McKenzie (Bristol: Polity Press, 2015), x-xiii.

¹⁷⁰ McKenzie, *Getting By*, 2.

¹⁷¹ McKenzie, *Getting By*, 17.

¹⁷² McKenzie, *Getting By*, 2.

¹⁷³ Beverley Skeggs, “Classifying Practices: Representations, Capitals and Recognitions,” in *Class Matters: ‘Working-Class’ Women’s Perspectives on Social Class*, eds. Pat Mahony and Christine Zmroczek (London: Taylor and Francis, 1997), 123-139 (130).

¹⁷⁴ Skeggs, “Classifying Practices,” 130.

¹⁷⁵ Skeggs, “Classifying Practices,” 130.

participation has become a Government mantra over recent years"¹⁷⁶ and that "sorting out" the working-class is the key to a utopian society. The last three decades of political rhetoric regarding the working-class as an issue that needs "fixing" is pithily summarised by McKenzie when she notes that in the 1980s, the Thatcherite government described the working-class as being trapped by a "cycle of poverty," then, in the 1990s, Tony Blair's government spoke of the working-class in terms of "exclusion and 'the excluded'." Finally, in 2006, David Cameron declared Britain to be "broken." As McKenzie sardonically notes, "we can all guess who broke it: the bankers? Politicians? No, of course not. It was the poor working class and welfare-dependant that spoilt it for everyone."¹⁷⁷

Working-class women have been a particular target of such policies, particularly when it comes to Higher Education. For example, Kate Hoskins, when examining the percentage of women employed as full-time and permanent professors in the academy, charts the numerous state-backed policies that have been introduced since WWII to encourage women into education.¹⁷⁸ Hoskins concludes that despite the implementation of so many policies over the years, the overall number of women working in the academy (let alone working-class women) remains "bleak reading."¹⁷⁹

The end result of over a century's worth of studies of working-class culture (almost all of which have been conducted by members of the middle-class) is that the working-class have been reduced to clichéd caricatures, whereby they either typify all that is wrong with the world or where their life of hard labour and simple pleasures is romanticised and inflated.¹⁸⁰ Diane Reay notes, "[e]ven celebrated studies like that of Willis (1977) can be read as an indictment of the working class."¹⁸¹ When faced with this legacy of negativity and the inevitable stereotyping

¹⁷⁶ Diane Reay, Miriam E. David, and Stephen Ball, eds. *Degrees of Choice: Social Class, Race and Gender in Higher Education* (Stoke on Trent: Trentham Books, 2005), 83.

¹⁷⁷ McKenzie, *Getting By*, 6.

¹⁷⁸ See: Kate Hoskins, "The price of success? The experiences of three senior working class female academics in the UK," *Women's Studies International Forum* 33 (2010): 134-140 (134-135).

¹⁷⁹ Hoskins, "The price of success?" 135.

¹⁸⁰ See: Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy*, 3-7.

¹⁸¹ Diane Reay, "The Double-Bind of the 'Working-Class' Feminist Academic: The Success of Failure or the Failure of Success?" in *Class Matters: 'Working-Class' Women's Perspectives on Social Class*, eds. Pat Mahony and Christine Zmroczek (London: Taylor and Francis, 1997), 18-29 (18). This is

of the working-class that it has led to, it is therefore extremely difficult to explain why I take pride in a heritage that, in many ways, conforms to the negative stereotypes that have dogged it for so long. Thus, whilst I have a militant pride in my working-class heritage, I have struggled in the face of such negativity to articulate exactly why I am proud to be working-class.

Jaye Johnson Thiel similarly describes her own struggles with negotiating her working-class background. Thiel asserts that she is proud of the fact that “an often scabby-kneed girl from the mill village and dirt road trailer community... somehow made it into academia despite the odds being stacked against her – generation poverty, teen pregnancy, and a penchant for performing ‘unlady-like’ when she feels fouled by the world.”¹⁸² She finds joy in the moments “when that working-class girl that grew up in a trailer creeps”¹⁸³ into her now middle-class life. Thiel ultimately concludes that by actively and positively engaging with her working-class self, she is kept honest and her academic voice is kept in check.¹⁸⁴ I too feel as though there is something about working-class culture that keeps you honest and grounded and able to put the luxury of belonging to the academy into perspective.

Just as Thiel does not deny that within her dwells a “bonfire sitting, t-shirt wearing, longneck bottle drinking woman,”¹⁸⁵ so too am I unwilling to deny the “real me” is a tattooed, pierced, and rather foul-mouthed working-class woman and that it is this woman that lies at the heart of my research. Whilst the cultural attributes that I value may not be of value to others, I am proud of them. I am proud of the fact that my working-class upbringing has meant that I have had to juggle education and employment since the age of fifteen; that at fourteen I learned to box at my local boxing club and that I had a good few fights when I was at school; that I believe a good night out includes shots, a kebab, and “unladylike” behaviour; that I managed to live off less than £30 a week when I was completing

in reference to Paul E. Willis’ *Learning to Labour: How Working Class Kids get Working Class Jobs* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011).

¹⁸² Jaye Johnson Thiel, “Working-class women in academic spaces: finding our muchness,” *Gender and Education* 28/5 (2016): 662-673 (670).

¹⁸³ Thiel, “Working-class women in academic spaces,” 664.

¹⁸⁴ Thiel, “Working-class women in academic spaces,” 670.

¹⁸⁵ Thiel, “Working-class women in academic spaces,” 669.

my undergraduate degree at King's College, London University. These attributes may mark me as "rough" and "common" to some, but I am proud nonetheless.

Skeggs's work repeatedly highlights how working-class women in particular are fully aware of the fact that the world around them almost always views them in a deeply negative manner¹⁸⁶ and that this awareness of the negative stereotypes of the working-class woman often leads to the rejection of their working-class identity. She asserts that to "identify as a working-class woman is to have to constantly negotiate the pathological sexualized positions that are available for us to occupy and for us and others to interpret and recognize ourselves through"¹⁸⁷ and that this has led to many working-class women "dis-identifying"¹⁸⁸ with working-class culture as it is no longer seen "as a positive label of identity."¹⁸⁹

Similarly, Reay and Thiel also assert that working-class women have become accustomed to "seeing ourselves through middle-class eyes"¹⁹⁰ and that the lenses through which they are produced result in women feeling "lost, changed, and uncertain,"¹⁹¹ as well as being overwhelmed by a "deeply felt sense of working-class inferiority"¹⁹² and "shame."¹⁹³ Such studies have prompted me to keep returning to the question of why I want to overtly be seen as working-class and to conduct research that celebrates this culture when so many working-class women avoid this identity completely. Is it because I want to partake in the oh-so middle-class, "academic game of being the most oppressed"?¹⁹⁴ After all, I am aware that it is a privilege to be part of the academy and that there are worse things that could happen to me than someone ridiculing my accent. Or is it because I am subconsciously mirroring a common defensive strategy utilised by working-class communities to "survive the extremes of social inequalities"¹⁹⁵ that are faced on a day-to-day basis? My proud identification as working-class and my desire to

¹⁸⁶ See: Beverley Skeggs, *Class, Self, Culture* (London: Routledge, 2004), *Formations of Class and Gender: Becoming Respectable* (London: SAGE, 1997), "Classifying Practices."

¹⁸⁷ Skeggs, "Classifying Practices," 125.

¹⁸⁸ Skeggs, "Classifying Practices," 125.

¹⁸⁹ Skeggs, "Classifying Practices," 123.

¹⁹⁰ Reay, "The Double-Bind of the 'Working-Class' Feminist Academic," 22.

¹⁹¹ Thiel, "Working-class women in academic spaces," 665.

¹⁹² Reay, "The Double-Bind of the 'Working-Class' Feminist Academic," 22.

¹⁹³ Reay, "The Double-Bind of the 'Working-Class' Feminist Academic," 22.

¹⁹⁴ Reay, "The Double-Bind of the 'Working-Class' Feminist Academic," 25.

¹⁹⁵ McKenzie, *Getting By*, 15.

celebrate working-class culture may be "a defensive mode, an angry reaction, fuelled by resentment at continually having to begin social interactions with a fear that one is being positioned by the discourses of degeneracy and vulgarity."¹⁹⁶ Or is it because my own actions can prove that the world has got it wrong? Yes, the working-class may dress, look, speak, and act in a certain way that is culturally unique and potentially conforms to now well-known stereotypes, but this does not mean that such cultural traits are any less valuable or desirable.

Rather than being forever concerned with how it is difficult to celebrate working-class culture, I have decided that I should just celebrate it and if I do so with authenticity, integrity, and honesty then the value and joy of the culture will shine through and hopefully my work will go some way to undoing decades of negativity towards the working-class.

In terms of how I have confronted my feelings that the academy is "'not for the likes of us,'"¹⁹⁷ working through such feelings has been significantly influenced by Helen Lucey, June Melody, and Valerie Walkerdine's examination of the "notion of hybridity,"¹⁹⁸ as well as their assertion that there are "no easy hybrids."¹⁹⁹ They assert that whilst the enhanced social capital and mobility that higher education can provide working-class women with has been examined in great depth, thus far the "darker side"²⁰⁰ or "shadows"²⁰¹ of this experience have yet to be examined.²⁰² Thus, the "complex losses"²⁰³ that achieving academic success cause, the "costs of that work,"²⁰⁴ the "psychic defences that are produced to deal with the difficult and contradictory feelings that educational success and failure so acutely, though often unconsciously, provoke for working-class people,"²⁰⁵ and the "inner turmoil"²⁰⁶ and

¹⁹⁶ Skeggs, "Classifying Practices," 126.

¹⁹⁷ Gerry Holloway, "Finding a Voice: On Becoming a Working-Class Feminist Academic," in *Class Matters: 'Working-Class' Women's Perspectives on Social Class*, eds. Pat Mahony and Christine Zmroczek (London: Taylor and Francis, 1997), 190-199 (197).

¹⁹⁸ Lucey, Melody, and Walkerdine, "Uneasy Hybrids," 238.

¹⁹⁹ Lucey, Melody, and Walkerdine, "Uneasy Hybrids," 238.

²⁰⁰ Lucey, Melody, and Walkerdine, "Uneasy Hybrids," 239

²⁰¹ Lucey, Melody, and Walkerdine, "Uneasy Hybrids," 239

²⁰² See: Lucey, Melody, and Walkerdine, "Uneasy Hybrids," 238-239.

²⁰³ Lucey, Melody, and Walkerdine, "Uneasy Hybrids," 240

²⁰⁴ Lucey, Melody, and Walkerdine, "Uneasy Hybrids," 239

²⁰⁵ Lucey, Melody, and Walkerdine, "Uneasy Hybrids," 239

²⁰⁶ Lucey, Melody, and Walkerdine, "Uneasy Hybrids," 240

“instabilities of the self”²⁰⁷ that working-class women experience as a result of Higher Education have been so far bypassed or denied.

Lucey, Melody, and Walkerdine stress that to fully understand the experiences of working-class women engaging in Higher Education, and subsequently their employment in the academy or other high-achieving fields, we must not only look at the positives of such achievements, but also the negatives, as well as the “psychodynamic processes involved”²⁰⁸ in negotiating this challenging journey. Diane Reay, Miriam E. David, and Stephen Ball also assert that we need to challenge the notion that education offers unproblematic positive advances.²⁰⁹ Hoskins also summarises “that there are emotional costs involved for some working class women who obtain senior posts in HE settings,”²¹⁰ an analysis that is particularly pertinent for me given my aspirations to work in academia.

The term “hybridity,” borrowed by Lucey, Melody, and Walkerdine from the field of postcolonial studies,²¹¹ is utilised to explain the bittersweet experience of education for working-class women and the way their identity is forever split as a result of being a working-class woman who has entered academia and is now an educational success. Their article focuses on the experiences of Nicky and Holly, two young working-class women that both persevered to achieve a university education. Nicky and Holly’s experiences resonate powerfully with my own, as I too have experienced personal turmoil and confusion as a result of becoming educated. For example, not only have I had mixed emotions about wanting to still belong to, yet avoid being trapped by, my background,²¹² I have also experienced the uncomfortable desire to belong in the middle-class world of the academy, even though culture inequalities exist in a painfully overt fashion and constantly work against working-class individuals in such a setting.

My working-class status therefore prevents me from ever feeling as though I belong, fit in, or “feel at home”²¹³ in the academy. In addition to this, it also

²⁰⁷ Lucey, Melody, and Walkerdine, “Uneasy Hybrids,” 240

²⁰⁸ Lucey, Melody, and Walkerdine, “Uneasy Hybrids,” 250

²⁰⁹ Reay, David, and Ball, *Degrees of Choice*, 83.

²¹⁰ Hoskins, “The Price of Success?” 135.

²¹¹ See: Lucey, Melody, and Walkerdine, “Uneasy Hybrids,” 239-240.

²¹² See: Lucey, Melody, and Walkerdine, “Uneasy Hybrids,” 247.

²¹³ Reay, “The Double Bind of the ‘Working-Class Feminist Academic,” 21.

prevents me from even knowing what it is I am actually trying to belong to; whilst I have tried to “get it right,” I am not even sure what “getting it right” really is, or how to achieve it.²¹⁴ I am therefore halted in my desire to fit in, not only by my need to remain “loyal” to my working-class “authentic self,”²¹⁵ but also by my lack of knowledge about Higher Education and the representations of the middle-class that my background has equipped me with.²¹⁶

Reay, David, and Ball explain that underlying the “hopeful anticipation”²¹⁷ of becoming a university student, working-class students often experience “confusions and ambiguities about the sort of self they are seeking which middle class students do not have to deal with to anything like the same extent”²¹⁸ and that “[w]orking class fears and anxieties about the move into higher education are interwoven with desires to fit in and feel at home.”²¹⁹ This results in feelings of being an “imposter”²²⁰ or as though one “could never be a part of or belong to [one’s] new cultural group.”²²¹ This is often because working-class women receive little to no advice about entering Higher Education,²²² which was certainly true for me as all I was ever told was that I was “clever enough” to apply.

Lucey, Melody, and Walkerdine identify the “lonely”²²³ journey to and through Higher Education as further exacerbating the painful hybridity of working-class women. Thus “great inner resources”²²⁴ are needed to survive this journey and that “[s]urvival guilt”²²⁵—in the sense that once educated, one leaves their families behind—often develops as a result of becoming upwardly mobile. Their identification of loneliness and survival guilt as pivotal to the inner turmoil that working-class women experience when attending university resonated strongly with me as I have had direct experience of each of these issues. Similarly, their

²¹⁴ See: Skeggs, “Classifying Practices,” 130-131.

²¹⁵ Reay, David, and Ball, *Degrees of Choice*, 94.

²¹⁶ See: Skeggs, “Classifying Practices,” 132, *Formations*, 82-88.

²¹⁷ Reay, David, and Ball, *Degrees of Choice*, 93.

²¹⁸ Reay, David, and Ball, *Degrees of Choice*, 93.

²¹⁹ Reay, David, and Ball, *Degrees of Choice*, 102.

²²⁰ Reay, David, and Ball, *Degrees of Choice*, 94.

²²¹ Skeggs, “Classifying Practices,” 131.

²²² Lucey, Melody, and Walkerdine, “Uneasy Hybrids,” 242.

²²³ Lucey, Melody, and Walkerdine, “Uneasy Hybrids,” 242.

²²⁴ Lucey, Melody, and Walkerdine, “Uneasy Hybrids,” 243.

²²⁵ Lucey, Melody, and Walkerdine, “Uneasy Hybrids,” 243.

analysis that the only typology that links working-class women who want to go to university is a sense of being highly independent²²⁶ is also true for my own journey into Higher Education.²²⁷ I have always been an independent woman and it is from this identification that I have drawn strength to survive my ever increasing insider/outsider positionalities. Therefore whilst my "hybridity" has brought me great sadness, my unwavering determination to be proud of who I am and to succeed has got me through.

The lonely road of Higher Education for working-class women and the hybrid nature of their existence is further complicated by the fact that this journey is often defined by the need to juggle education with work and family. Whilst I am fortunate that I do not have any dependants, I do have financial commitments and even though I was awarded a scholarship to complete this PhD I still had to work part-time to meet those commitments. This juggling of studying and working is one of the most common features of the working-class embarking into Higher Education and for me it is something that has made it more difficult for me to engage with my middle-class counterparts. It has also made me resentful of them, a feeling that only enhances the pervasiveness of "class contempt"²²⁸ in Higher Education. Just like Holloway, I have become "resentful and resistant to"²²⁹ relationships with the middle-class. This anger is enhanced by the fact that I may well now be seen by others as middle-class and thus I may now be complicit in the hierarchies of oppression that I have fought so hard against. Reay has similarly reflected upon the classist "rage"²³⁰ that propelled her through her education and the feelings of guilt that she has because she is now implicated in the inequalities that the class system creates.²³¹

Holloway reveals how she managed her finances during her education:

For myself, I always saw my undergraduate study as paid work. I worked set hours, dictated by my daughter's needs, and paid myself my grant monthly, like a salary cheque. When I started teaching part-time to

²²⁶ See: Lucey, Melody, and Walkerdine, "Uneasy Hybrids," 241.

²²⁷ See also: Holloway, "Finding a Voice," 193.

²²⁸ Reay, "The Double-Bind of the 'Working-Class' Feminist Academic," 25.

²²⁹ Holloway, "Finding a Voice," 194.

²³⁰ Reay, "The Double-Bind of the 'Working-Class' Feminist Academic," 23.

²³¹ Reay, "The Double-Bind of the 'Working-Class' Feminist Academic," 23-25.

subsidize my postgraduate studies, my extended family were shocked that I was continuing to study but mollified that I had a part-time job. This fitted in with their notions of women’s proper work.²³²

This passage struck a particularly strong chord with me as I read Holloway’s article whilst at work—at a moment when I was quite literally juggling studying with working.

Reay, David, and Ball provide statistical evidence for the claim that it is commonplace for working-class students to juggle more commitments than their middle-class counterparts. For example, their questionnaire sample of 502 students showed that over two-thirds of the students that identified as working-class were in paid employment whilst studying²³³ and that material constraints and the anticipation of having to hold down a job throughout the duration of their university education determined much of their experience of education.²³⁴

In addition to this, I have also had to become accustomed to those from my home community repeatedly asking “when will you get a real job?”, referring to a nine-to-five, either service- or office-based job with little opportunity for progression. This question further complicates my hybrid status as in one social setting I am confronted by people who do not need to work, and then in another, by people that do not value education.

However, whilst the pursuit of an education is undoubtedly a great financial risk for working-class people, even with the advent of loans and bursaries, it is also socially, emotionally, culturally, and psychologically costly, and there is nothing that can be offered to working-class individuals to help alleviate such costs. This is particularly evident when we consider that gaining an education can mark the “transition from one class into another”²³⁵ for the working-class. One has to learn to negotiate the tensions that arise as a result of one’s working-class identity (or “authentic self”²³⁶) being at odds with one’s desire to transgress the traditional

²³² Holloway, “Finding a Voice,” 197.

²³³ Reay, David, and Ball, *Degrees of Choice*, 87.

²³⁴ See: Reay, David, and Ball, *Degrees of Choice*, 84-91.

²³⁵ Reay, David, and Ball, *Degrees of Choice*, 96.

²³⁶ Reay, David, and Ball, *Degrees of Choice*, 94.

boundaries of one's class and enter into another class, however fleetingly.²³⁷ Reay elaborates on this tension by highlighting how a working-class woman's movement into more middle-class circles can often feel like a "treacherous process"²³⁸ owing to the perception that she is being disloyal to her upbringing and becoming dislocated from it.

Educational success for working-class women is thus identified by Lucey, Melody, and Walkerdine as a difficult and lonely journey of "dis-identification"²³⁹ where a "loss of identity, control, status (within the family perhaps), the community, belonging, [and] safety"²⁴⁰ typify the experience. Gaining an education may therefore lead to a "disaffiliation"²⁴¹ with one's working-class background, making it harder for those who wish to maintain their working-class identity to do so. For me, the time I have spent in the academy has been dominated by such tensions, which have ultimately led to me feeling ill at home.

This disaffiliation, however, can be either purposeful or accidental. For example, Reay, David, and Ball highlight that some working-class women seek a university education so that they can find a "better, improved academic self"²⁴² that leaves behind their working-class roots. Others, however, may fear this disaffiliation as they wish to maintain their original class status, yet also improve themselves. It is the latter that typifies my own situation. I am perpetually concerned by "questions around loyalty and disloyalty, belonging and not belonging."²⁴³

Just as Lucey, Melody, and Walkerdine have identified, Reay also reflects upon the more insidious side of the independent working-class woman's desire to better herself and become more than she expected to be. Reay, however, emphasises that succeeding as a working-class woman can also cause conflict amongst other working-class women as those that have succeeded can be "seduced"²⁴⁴ into thinking that they are now somehow special, better, or more

²³⁷ See: Reay, David, and Ball, *Degrees of Choice*, 95.

²³⁸ Reay, "The Double-Bind of the 'Working-Class' Feminist Academic," 20.

²³⁹ Lucey, Melody, and Walkerdine, "Uneasy Hybrids," 247.

²⁴⁰ Lucey, Melody, and Walkerdine, "Uneasy Hybrids," 247.

²⁴¹ Reay, David, and Ball, *Degrees of Choice*, 98.

²⁴² Reay, David, and Ball, *Degrees of Choice*, 98.

²⁴³ Reay, "The Double-Bind of the 'Working-Class' Feminist Academic," 24.

²⁴⁴ Reay, "The Double-Bind of the 'Working-Class' Feminist Academic," 24.

worthy and that those who have supposedly not succeeded. This creates yet another hierarchy of oppression for working-class people where the educational success of working-class women becomes "overlooked in discussions of meritocracy"²⁴⁵ and "tokenistic,"²⁴⁶ as well as being used to "underscore the unworthiness of those that fail".²⁴⁷ Even when successful working-class women are not themselves "seduced" into thinking this, it is still assumed by others that they do think this, thus they simply cannot win.

By engaging with the work of working-class women who have become educational successes, I have received comforting instruction on how to manage the personal, psychological, and emotional "price"²⁴⁸ and "cost"²⁴⁹ of my education and the "losses"²⁵⁰ I have incurred because of it. In addition to this, by engaging with the work of scholars who have focused closely on the issue of insider/outsider status,²⁵¹ I have been able to keep my multiple insider/outsider statuses in check throughout this research project.

Reflexivity, Femininity, and Class

My examination of the multiplicitous nature of my insider/outsider status made me realise how my very understanding and implementation of reflexivity is not only a product of the extant studies on reflexivity I have engaged with, but it is also complicated, influenced, and shaped by my positionality as a working-class woman. I can therefore positively and critically utilise the fact that I can never escape the consequences of my positionality and that I will always be constrained by the

²⁴⁵ Reay, "The Double-Bind of the 'Working-Class' Feminist Academic," 19.

²⁴⁶ Reay, "The Double-Bind of the 'Working-Class' Feminist Academic," 20.

²⁴⁷ Reay, "The Double-Bind of the 'Working-Class' Feminist Academic," 24.

²⁴⁸ Holloway, "Finding a Voice," 198.

²⁴⁹ Reay, "The Double-Bind of the 'Working-Class' Feminist Academic," 21.

²⁵⁰ Lucey, Melody, and Walkerdine, "Uneasy Hybrids," 240.

²⁵¹ Such as Greene; "On the Inside Looking In."

power structures that surround me²⁵² to reflect upon how my position as a working-class women informs, complicates, and shapes all aspects of my research.

The insights of a number of female scholars have been instructive in this aspect of my research.²⁵³ However, it is the work of Skeggs that has shaped this aspect of my research the most.²⁵⁴ Skeggs’s reflections on class and gender, particularly her examination of the capital and resources these issues provide a person with, has substantially shaped the development of my research. Skeggs’s influence on my research can be summarised in the following fourfold manner: 1. She has made me aware of the unique cultural resources I can draw upon as a working-class woman and how these resources can be put to use in this particular research project and throughout my life; 2. She has alerted me to the connections between class and reflexivity and how reflexivity is both demonstrative and manifest of power; 3. She has clarified my thinking with regard to my dual positionality as both a working-class woman and a postgraduate researcher; 4. She has given me the confidence to continue using my dual positionality as a working-class woman and a member of the academy to give voice to those that may not readily have access to such powerful and elitist institutions. I will now unpack each of these influences individually.

Firstly, Skeggs’s ruminations on why some cultures—with “culture” here referring to class—allow for mobility and may be considered exchangeable or

²⁵² See: Daphne Patai, “(Response) When Method becomes Power,” in *Power and Method: Political Activism and Educational Research*, ed. Andrew Gitlen (New York: Routledge, 1994), 61-73 (70).

²⁵³ The most notable examples are: Diane Reay, “Cultural capitalists and academic habitus: Classed and gendered labour in UK higher education,” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 27 (2004) 31–39, “‘Dim Dross’: Marginalised Women Both Inside and Outside the Academy,” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 23/1 (2000): 13–21, “Surviving in Dangerous Places: Working-Class Women, Women’s Studies and Higher Education,” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 21/1 (1998): 11–19, “Feminist Theory, Habitus, and Social Class: Disrupting Notions of Classlessness,” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 20/2 (1997): 225–233, “The Double-Bind of the ‘Working-Class’ Feminist Academic”; Valerie Walkerdine, Helen Lucey and June Melody, *Growing up girl: psycho-social explorations of gender and class* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001); Lucey, Melody, and Walkerdine, “Uneasy Hybrids”; Valerie Walkerdine, *Daddy’s Girl: Young Girls and Popular Culture* (London: Macmillan Press, 1997); Valerie Hey, “Joining the Club? Academia and Working-class Femininities Correspondence,” *Gender and Education* 15/3 (2003): 319–336; Hoskins, “The price of success?”; Thiel, “Working-class women in academic spaces”; Holloway, “Finding a Voice”; and Louise Morley, “A Class of One’s Own: Women, Social Class and the Academy,” in *Class Matters: ‘Working-Class’ Women’s Perspectives on Social Class*, eds. Pat Mahoney and Christine Zmroczek (London: Taylor and Francis, 1997), 109–122.

²⁵⁴ Skeggs, *Class, Self, Culture, Formations of Class and Gender*, “Classifying Practices.”

worthy of appropriation when others are considered undesirable and serve only to fix individuals in their cultural milieu has led me to consider which aspects of my own culture, namely that of being a white, working-class woman, might be considered useful cultural "resources."²⁵⁵ However, I found considering this highly personal aspect of my positionality quite a difficult process, not because I am not proud of my culture or because I could not readily identify aspects of it that I find to be positive or useful, but instead because I have never been forced to consider or confront how this positionality is viewed from the outside.

The process of this examination, however, was rather demoralising. For example, Skeggs repeatedly describes how the working-class have traditionally been associated with "[d]irt and waste, sexuality and contagion, danger and disorder, degeneracy and pathology,"²⁵⁶ "excess"²⁵⁷ and "waste, excrement, sewage, that threatens to spill over and contaminate the order of the nation."²⁵⁸ White working-class women in particular have come to be the "abject of the nation."²⁵⁹ Skeggs further examines how the white working-class woman is coded by society through the lens of the "Essex girl" who is considered representative of all white working-class women owing to her having "no taste,"²⁶⁰ being "physically excessive"²⁶¹ and "immoral,"²⁶² and having "no shame."²⁶³ Skeggs elaborates on this when she notes that such women are often typified by their attraction to particularly distasteful hairstyles (such as "permed, 'brassy blonde' and 'pineapple heads'"²⁶⁴). As a white working-class woman who, incidentally, is not that thin and has curly bleached-blond hair, I found this analysis particularly humiliating. However, by engaging with Skeggs's examination of how working-class women have been traditionally coded or represented by wider society, my eyes have been opened to the marks (read, "culture") that society inscribe²⁶⁵ on the working-class

²⁵⁵ See: Skeggs, *Class, Self, Culture*, 3.

²⁵⁶ Skeggs, *Class, Self, Culture*, 4.

²⁵⁷ Skeggs, *Class, Self, Culture*, 99.

²⁵⁸ Skeggs, *Class, Self, Culture*, 104.

²⁵⁹ Skeggs, *Class, Self, Culture*, 23.

²⁶⁰ Skeggs, *Class, Self, Culture*, 112.

²⁶¹ Skeggs, *Class, Self, Culture*, 112.

²⁶² Skeggs, *Class, Self, Culture*, 112.

²⁶³ Skeggs, *Class, Self, Culture*, 112.

²⁶⁴ Skeggs, *Class, Self, Culture*, 101.

²⁶⁵ See: Skeggs, *Class, Self, Culture*, 12-13.

woman’s body—on my body—that delineate her/my fixed position at the most distasteful end of working-class culture and how such marks are not valued or open to exchange or appropriation.²⁶⁶

In spite of this, my social capital²⁶⁷ as a working-class woman, particularly one that is so overtly geographically located,²⁶⁸ became a vital resource during this project as the male participants saw this social capital as legitimising my authority as a researcher of the working-class, thus they attributed symbolic capital²⁶⁹ to my cultural resources. Therefore, during this research project, my cultural resources were given power—a rare occurrence for the working-class. I was able to enhance this by my open unwillingness to consider working-class culture as something that is to be “left behind”²⁷⁰ and my readiness to conduct²⁷¹ myself in a manner that was natural to me, in a fashion that did not include pretentiousness, the putting on of heirs and graces, or the downplaying of my accent. These factors all culminated in my working-class-ness becoming a signifier of my authority to research it. Whilst the cultural resources I have access to may not yet be seen as valuable by wider society, this does not mean that they cannot be put to use. By doing so, I am forcing them to be seen as valuable, particularly as through my role as a postgraduate researcher I have access to the “conversion mechanisms”²⁷² that can award symbolic capital—and thus power—to cultural resources.

Secondly, Skeggs has further alerted me to the fact that reflexivity, as it has thus far been practiced in academia, is a direct product of the bourgeoisie middle-class and their unwillingness to openly identify themselves, thus masking their power.²⁷³ The positioning of oneself in relation to one’s research and one’s research participants is therefore about the transparency of power. Just as Pillow sought to assert, the positioning of myself as a reflexive researcher must not be to re-inscribe the unjust hierarchy that exists within society, or to shy away from making

²⁶⁶ See: Skeggs, *Class, Self, Culture*, 7-12.

²⁶⁷ See: Skeggs, *Class, Self, Culture*, 17.

²⁶⁸ See: Skeggs, *Class, Self, Culture*, 112-113.

²⁶⁹ See: Skeggs, *Class, Self, Culture*, 17.

²⁷⁰ Skeggs, *Class, Self, Culture*, 99.

²⁷¹ See: Skeggs, *Class, Self, Culture*, 100.

²⁷² Skeggs, *Class, Self, Culture*, 96.

²⁷³ Just as I have already demonstrated when I engaged with the work of Bourdieu.

transparent my own power (or potential lack of), but instead it should be to highlight, challenge, admonish, and make answerable the institutions and conditions that have made society the way it is. My role as a reflexive researcher thus mirrors the primary questions of those in Skeggs’s *Class, Self, Culture*: What is it that made class? And what made society the way it is today?

Thirdly, Skeggs’s reflections on gender, class, power, and academia have helped me in negotiating the dilemmas I have been experiencing with regard to my multiple positionalities and the way in which the responsibilities of these positionalities may conflict with one another. One method I have been regularly employing, albeit unknowingly, to help me manage this reality is that of the “piss-take.”²⁷⁴ Citing the work of Paul E. Willis,²⁷⁵ Skeggs notes that one of the many ways the working-class have been able to cope with the oppression and disdain of the middle-class is by “taking the piss” or “having a laugh.”²⁷⁶ Such activities have traditionally been employed to make “the day more bearable.”²⁷⁷ It was quite thrilling to discover that I have long been employing this method to help me cope with the anxiety and distress that being part of the academy causes me. By “taking the piss” out of academia, particularly when in the company of other working-class individuals, I am able to (re-)ground myself in my working-class heritage, as well as remind myself of the absurdness, peculiarity, and downright pointlessness of many of the aspects of academia that cause me distress. “Taking the piss” therefore enables me to distance myself from, and downplay the aspect of, the positionality of myself that I am most uncomfortable with and thus reduce the levels of anxiety that being part of the academy causes me.

Finally, Skeggs has given me the confidence to continue in my discipline-specific endeavour to give the white working-class of Britain a voice within the halls of academia. By making me aware of the fact that I have access to “conversion

²⁷⁴ Skeggs, *Class, Self, Culture*, 116.

²⁷⁵ Paul E. Willis, “‘Taking the Piss’: Double Consciousness and the Sensuous Activity of Manual Labour,” paper presented at the Labour Studies Conference, Manchester University, Manchester, 2002. A published version of this paper can be found here: Paul E. Willis, “Tekin’ the Piss?”, in *History in Person: Enduring Struggles, Contentious Practice, Intimate Identities*, eds. Dorothy Holland and Jean Lave (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 2001), 171-216.

²⁷⁶ Skeggs, *Class, Self, Culture*, 116.

²⁷⁷ Skeggs, *Class, Self, Culture*, 116.

mechanisms,” Skeggs has given me the courage to make use of my position in the academy so that those who share my more dominant working-class positionality but do not have access to such a powerful and elitist institution can speak through me²⁷⁸ and have their voices heard.

Skeggs’s work has similarly drawn my attention to the fact that my reflexivity has the potential to ‘other’ the participants of this study,²⁷⁹ however, I wish to stress that my use of reflexivity is not to emphasise the difference between myself and the men in my study, but instead it is to recognise and bring to the fore the sameness that exists between us. By using reflexivity, I am therefore trying to mirror Skeggs’s practice in *Formations*,²⁸⁰ whereby I merge my voice and knowledge with the voice and knowledge of this study’s participants,²⁸¹ making both accounts sites of authority.²⁸² In other words, I am aiming to ensure that my research is as valid and authentic as possible and that the experiences and voices of those that contributed to it, as well as my own experiences and voice, are not only heard, but are also privileged and taken seriously.

This notion of taking the situated and embodied voice seriously is highlighted by Kate Pahl and Steve Pool in their joint article exploring methodologies for developing and writing collaborative research with young children. They argue that “if we are to take children’s epistemologies seriously, we have to give up on our own, sometimes clever sounding, academic ideas.”²⁸³ This results in authority and precedence being given to the realities, words, experiences, and modes of enquiry of the research participants. To emphasise this, they propose

²⁷⁸ Making oneself available for others to speak through is a central element of CBS and is demonstrated most visibly by West. West repeatedly endeavours to ensure that his position as a white South Africa man working in academia is put to use for the benefit of those he “reads with,” namely black South African women. For example, West openly talks about how “White, middle-class males are groomed for greatness, particularly in the apartheid past of South Africa.” West’s development of CBS ensures that he makes positive use of his problematic positionality by enabling others to “make use of” his privileged status and to use him as a tool to gain access to institutions and resources that they would normally be denied. See: West, *The Academy of the Poor*, 36-37.

²⁷⁹ See: Skeggs, *Class, Self, Culture*, 128.

²⁸⁰ See: Skeggs, *Formations*. .

²⁸¹ See: Skeggs, *Class, Self, Culture*, 131.

²⁸² Skeggs, *Class, Self, Culture*, 132.

²⁸³ Kate Pahl and Steve Pool, “‘Living Your Life Because it’s the Only Life You’ve Got’: Participatory Research as a Site for Discovery in a Creation Project in a Primary School in Thurnscoe, UK,” *Qualitative Research Journal* 11/2 (2011): 17-37 (18).

that researchers should choose a writing style that enables the very process of writing to become an additional "mode of inquiry,"²⁸⁴ and consequently chose a writing style that privileges the words and interpretations of the children they worked with over their own academic ones. Pahl and Pool's article highlights how essential it is for a researcher to acknowledge the situatedness of the data they use in their research and that in order to do this they should not attempt to remove such data from the situated and embodied reality in which it originated. This means that the embodied selves of both the researcher and the research participants should be included in every stage of the research, something that I have sought to do through adopting a reflexive working practice.²⁸⁵

²⁸⁴ Pahl and Pool, "Living Your Life," 19.

²⁸⁵ A tabulation of how reflexivity actually manifested itself in practice during this research project can be found in Appendix 3.

CHAPTER THREE. CONTEXTUAL BIBLE STUDY AND ETHNOGRAPHY

Defining Ethnography

Central to my application and development of CBS is the claim that CBS should be grounded in ethnography, or, to put it another way, an ethnographic study of the group participating in the CBS programme should be conducted before, and then used to inform, the CBS programme. However, before I examine this claim, it is necessary that I first unpack how I am using the term “ethnography.”

The term “ethnography” has evolved to mean different things in different disciplines. This is primarily because it is often used interchangeably with the term “qualitative.” As a result, it can be argued that ethnography has become a distinctly “overused term”²⁸⁶ that “appears to be a modish substitute for qualitative.”²⁸⁷ Tim Ingold asserts that the “growing inability to explain what we really mean by ethnography is an increasing source of embarrassment.” Similarly, Paul Atkinson notes that whilst it is a positive development for the Social Sciences that qualitative research has spread into “[e]mergent disciplines such as cultural studies,”²⁸⁸ “many substantive fields of research – such as educational research, organisational research and nursing research,”²⁸⁹ and “cultural geography, discursive psychology, feminist scholarship and many other disciplines,”²⁹⁰ and that whilst “qualitative

²⁸⁶ Tim Ingold, “That’s enough about Ethnography!” *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 4/1 (2014): 383-395 (383).

²⁸⁷ Ingold, “That’s enough about Ethnography!” 384.

²⁸⁸ Paul Atkinson, “Qualitative Research – Unity and Diversity,” *Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 6/3/26 (2005), n.p., paragraph 1.

²⁸⁹ Atkinson, “Qualitative Research,” paragraph 1.

²⁹⁰ Atkinson, “Qualitative Research,” paragraph 1.

research of many varieties has flourished on a global scale over the past twenty years or so,”²⁹¹ it has also become “increasingly fragmented”²⁹² and “confused.”²⁹³

Regardless of such fragmentation, it is generally accepted that the defining feature of ethnography is that it requires the researcher to be fully immersed, for a good length of time, within the community that s/he is seeking to study. Thus, in the simplest of senses, the term “ethnography” refers to the lengthy and systematic study of a group, community, society, or culture through the use of a multitude of qualitative (and some quantitative) research techniques, the most prominent of which is participant-observation. Alan Bryman summarises this widely-accepted understanding when he states that ethnography “could be viewed as a simple process of joining a group, watching what goes on, making some notes, and writing it all up.”²⁹⁴ Similarly, John D. Brewer also summarises ethnography as “telling it like it is from the inside.”²⁹⁵ However, Bryman goes on to warn us that ethnography “is nowhere near as straightforward as this implies.”²⁹⁶

Before I unpack exactly how ethnography has been used in this research project, as well as what extant literature has informed my usage (most significantly, the work of Atkinson, Brewer, Bryman, Robert G. Burgess, Martyn Hammersley, Ingold, David Silverman, and John Van Maanen), it is pertinent that I first examine ethnography’s origins, history, and development.

Ethnography’s Origins

The difficulty that scholars experience when trying to define ethnography has its roots in ethnography’s origins; even from the beginning, the term has been used to refer to a multitude of practices. Unlike determining a definition of ethnography,

²⁹¹ Atkinson, “Qualitative Research,” paragraph 1.

²⁹² Atkinson, “Qualitative Research,” paragraph 2.

²⁹³ Atkinson, “Qualitative Research,” paragraph 6.

²⁹⁴ Alan Bryman, *Social Research Methods* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 431.

²⁹⁵ John D. Brewer, *Ethnography* (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2009), 17.

²⁹⁶ Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, 431.

tracking down its origins is much less tricky. It is universally accepted that ethnography was developed to meet the needs of twentieth century anthropologists and sociologists, as before ethnography’s arrival such scholars “relied on explorers, traders, missionaries and government officials for accounts of the peoples they studied.”²⁹⁷ It was evident, however, that this “armchair mode of cultural investigation”²⁹⁸ was highly flawed, as it relied almost solely upon accounts produced by individuals that “had vested interests to ‘change’ the peoples amongst whom they worked, which in turn resulted in some bias in the accounts provided for anthropological work.”²⁹⁹ Thus it became necessary for such scholars to leave the comfort of their armchairs to collect the requisite data themselves. Subsequently, ethnography was born.

However, what is most interesting about ethnography’s birth is that it happened twice, as it was developed almost simultaneously by two completely distinct and independent intellectual traditions: the first was British and the second was North American. The British version of ethnography has now become known as the “classical tradition of social anthropology”³⁰⁰ and the North American version has become known as the “Chicago [S]chool of sociology.”³⁰¹

For coherence, I will examine separately how each intellectual tradition formulated their method of ethnography. In Britain, ethnography was developed as the core methodology for conducting research in the field of social anthropology. The first foray into ethnographic field research can be found in the works of Alfred R. Radcliffe-Brown, who, in 1910, went on an expedition to Australia to study Aboriginal culture. However, the ethnographic method employed by Radcliffe-Brown has come to be known as the “veranda model”³⁰² and is not now considered

²⁹⁷ Robert G. Burgess, *In the Field: An Introduction to Field Research* (London: Routledge, 1991), 12.

²⁹⁸ John Van Maanen, *Tales From the Field: On Writing Ethnography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 15.

²⁹⁹ Burgess, *In the Field*, 12.

³⁰⁰ Brewer, *Ethnography*, 11. For a more thorough examination of this tradition, see: Sharon Macdonald, “British Social Anthropology,” in *Handbook of Ethnography*, eds. Paul Atkinson et al. (London: SAGE, 2007), 60-79.

³⁰¹ Brewer, *Ethnography*, 11. For a more thorough examination of this tradition, see: Mary Jo Deegan, “The Chicago School of Ethnography,” in *Handbook of Ethnography*, eds. Paul Atkinson et al. (London: SAGE, 2007), 11-25.

³⁰² Burgess, *In the Field*, 12.

“good” ethnography. This is because this method primarily consisted of Radcliffe-Brown “working from the veranda of the missionary and governmental official” and often resulted in “the day-to-day lives of the people [being] largely ignored and few first hand observations [being] made.”³⁰³

The colonial roots of this model and its proclivity for enabling anthropologists to view “their informants with considerable contempt”³⁰⁴ meant that this version of ethnography soon came under fire. One of the most influential opponents of Radcliffe-Brown’s version of ethnography was Bronislaw Malinowski,³⁰⁵ who advocated that “the anthropologist must relinquish the relative comforts of the chair on the veranda”³⁰⁶ in favour of going “into the villages to see the natives at work”³⁰⁷ and “to sail with them on their trading ventures with other tribes and to observe them fishing, trading and working.”³⁰⁸ It was this more hands-on style of fieldwork, often “sustained by myths of the heroic lone fieldworker,”³⁰⁹ that became anthropology’s preferred ethnographic methodology. For example, Malinowski’s method of ethnography can be seen in the works of Margaret Mead,³¹⁰ E. E. Evans-Pritchard,³¹¹ Mary Douglas,³¹² and Claude Levi-Strauss.³¹³

Malinowski’s development of ethnography relied upon participant-observation as its principal data collection method. For example, when describing the “[s]ubject, [m]ethod and [s]cope”³¹⁴ of ethnography, Malinowski concludes that the definitive goal of the ethnographer is:

³⁰³ Burgess, *In the Field*, 12.

³⁰⁴ Burgess, *In the Field*, 12.

³⁰⁵ For what is considered Malinowski’s most influential work, see: Bronislaw Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific: An Account of Native Enterprise and Adventure in the Archipelagoes of Melanesian New Guinea* (London: Routledge, 1999).

³⁰⁶ Burgess, *In the Field*, 13.

³⁰⁷ Burgess, *In the Field*, 13.

³⁰⁸ Burgess, *In the Field*, 13.

³⁰⁹ Paul Atkinson, Amanda Coffey, and Sara Delamont, “Ethnography: Post, Past, and Present,” *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 28/5 (1999): 460-471 (461).

³¹⁰ See: Margaret Mead, *The Coming of Age in Samoa: A Study of Adolescence and Sex in Primitive Societies* (Hamondsworth: Penguin Books, 1943).

³¹¹ See: E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *Kinship and Marriage among the Nuer* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), *The Nuer: A Description of the Modes of Livelihood and Political Institutions of a Nilotic People* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), *Nuer Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956).

³¹² See: Mary Douglas, *The Lele of the Kasai* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963).

³¹³ See: Claude Levi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques*, trans. Jonathon Cape (London: Penguin Group, 2011), *A World on the Wane*, trans. John Russell (London: Hutchinson, 1961).

³¹⁴ Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, 1-25.

To grasp the native’s point of view, his relation to life, to realise *his* vision of *his* world. We have to study man, and we must study what concerns him most intimately, that is, the hold which life has on him.³¹⁵

During this classical period of social anthropology, ethnography primarily consisted of white men or, in some cases, white women under the guidance of white men, setting sail to exotic lands to observe the day-to-day lives and activities of the “noble savage,”³¹⁶ whose “exotic” “primitive” society was seen to be the antithesis to the “civilised” West. The gaze of the early ethnographers therefore fell upon those living in tribal or islander contexts.³¹⁷ Because of this, classical ethnography has become known as the “*noblesse oblige* method,”³¹⁸ owing to the fact that the ethnographer was invariably a visiting “wealthy patron in the society under study.”³¹⁹

When assessing the development of ethnography in Britain, it is essential that the impact of British colonialism is not overlooked, as it can be argued that the emphasis classical social anthropology placed upon conducting research in distant foreign lands mirrored the aspirations of the British Empire, as many of the early works produced via this method focused upon countries that were colonised by Britain. The origins of British ethnography were thus “tied to the needs of the British Empire to understand the cultures and groups it was seeking to rule once the period of colonial conquest was completed and assimilation in the ‘British family of nations’ was possible.”³²⁰

In contrast to this focus on the “exotic,” the Chicago School instead sought to emphasise the importance of studying and understanding the groups and communities that can be found surrounding the academic at home. For example,

³¹⁵ Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, 25.

³¹⁶ I am aware of the colonial and racist overtones of terms such as “exotic” and “primitive,” as well as their inaccuracy. However, I am merely using them to echo how ethnographic work during this period was understood, and how anthropologists at this time referred to their research subjects.

³¹⁷ Something which is clearly demonstrated by the works of Malinowski, Mead, Douglas, Evans-Pritchard, and Levi-Strauss.

³¹⁸ Burgess, *In the Field*, 13.

³¹⁹ Burgess, *In the Field*, 13.

³²⁰ Brewer, *Ethnography*, 11.

the founding members of this school (with Robert E. Park,³²¹ William Isaac Thomas,³²² and Nels Anderson³²³ being notable examples) emphasised that it was the “margins of urban industrialised society in the United States”³²⁴ that should be the focus of ethnography’s gaze. However, despite their efforts to redirect the academic gaze, in much the same as British ethnography, North American ethnography similarly focused upon the ‘other,’ with the vast majority of its studies being conducted on “deviant sub-groups, like prostitutes, drug dealers, street gangs, various unusual urban occupations, such as taxi dance hostesses, jack rollers, janitors and the hobo, and relatively unknown social worlds, like those of fop houses and burlesque halls, Polish immigrants, Jewish ghetto culture and the culture of the slum.”³²⁵ “In short, the focus was mainly upon groups with whom the researcher shared little or no experience.”³²⁶ Therefore, whilst the Chicago School sought to focus upon North American society, it invariably carried the same othering tendencies as British ethnography, as it still positioned the researcher as the outsider and just “[l]ike social anthropologists they were strangers in their own society.”³²⁷

Whilst both of these traditions focused upon different societies and developed their own independent methodologies—British social anthropology called their practices “ethnography” and the Chicago School called theirs “participant observation” or “fieldwork”—they were, in effect, much the same.³²⁸ Both sought to utilise research techniques that had observation at their core. Furthermore, both traditions focused on “outsiders” or “others,” with distance, whether geographically or culturally, being central to the relationship between the researcher and the researched.

³²¹ See: Robert E. Park, *Human Communities: The City and Human Ecology* (New York: The Free Press, 1952).

³²² William Isaac Thomas and Florian Znaniecki, *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America: A Classic Work in Immigration History*, ed. Eli Zaretsky (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1996).

³²⁰ See: Nels Anderson, *On Hobos and Homelessness*, ed. Raffaele Rauty (London: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

³²⁴ Brewer, *Ethnography*, 12.

³²⁵ Brewer, *Ethnography*, 12.

³²⁶ Burgess, *In the Field*, 16.

³²⁷ Burgess, *In the Field*, 16.

³²⁸ See: Brewer, *Ethnography*, 13.

In addition to these two clearly defined intellectual traditions, Burgess affirms that observational research methods were also being employed simultaneously in countless other disciplines: in "'community' studies or locality studies in sociology in Britain and the USA,"³²⁹ "in studies of geographical localities,"³³⁰ in the "sociology of deviance,"³³¹ and in "the sociology of labour and industry, the sociology of health and illness, and the sociology of education."³³² The birth of ethnography can therefore be linked to an overall recognition by researchers for the need to establish a universal research method enabling researchers to not only get closer to those they wished to study, but to also better understand them.

From its initial origins, however, ethnography has gone through a series of distinctive "moments"³³³ of development. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln identify the "complex historical field"³³⁴ of qualitative and ethnographic research as consisting of "at least eight historical moments... that overlap and simultaneously operate in the present."³³⁵ These eight moments are described by Denzin and Lincoln as being: "the traditional (1900-1950), the modernist or golden age (1950-1970), blurred genres (1970-1986), the crisis of representation (1986-1990), the postmodern, a period of experimental and new ethnographies (1990-1995), postexperimental inquiry (1995-2000), the methodologically contested present (2000-2010), and the future (2010-), which is now."³³⁶ Denzin and Lincoln's categorisation provides those seeking to utilise ethnography in the contemporary era with a framework for tracing the many waves of change that have occurred in the field. For example, it allows us to readily identify the to-ing and fro-ing of epistemological theorising, the varying influence of external paradigms on ethnographic research, the fluctuating role of the researcher in the discipline and

³²⁹ Burgess, *In the Field*, 17.

³³⁰ Burgess, *In the Field*, 17.

³³¹ Burgess, *In the Field*, 17.

³³² Burgess, *In the Field*, 18.

³³³ See: Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, "Introduction: Disciplining the practice of Qualitative Research," in *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*, eds. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (London: SAGE, 2011), 1-20 (3).

³³⁴ Denzin and Lincoln, "Introduction," 3.

³³⁵ Denzin and Lincoln, "Introduction," 3.

³³⁶ Denzin and Lincoln, "Introduction," 3.

out in the field, the changing application of practical methodological procedures, and the shift in the styles of writing-up used.

Whilst this categorisation of the history and development of ethnography aids us in identifying its pivotal "moments" and the issues and tensions that have driven these "moments" in a single glance, such timelines are not perfect. Paul Atkinson, Amanda Coffey, and Sara Delamont critically engage with the 1994 edition of Denzin and Lincoln's chapter³³⁷ and suggest that Denzin and Lincoln's timeline may in fact "mislead or distort the intellectual field"³³⁸ as "[e]ach of the periods or moments – especially the earlier ones – is too neatly packaged"³³⁹ and that the contrast between the supposedly more clearly defined perspectives of the past and the multiplicitous standpoints and methods of today "is too sharply drawn."³⁴⁰ Atkinson et al. therefore challenge the "narrow view"³⁴¹ that there are discernible "moments" in the history of ethnography. Atkinson also asserts that the term "vector"³⁴² would be more appropriate as this implies "the directionality of forces in an intellectual field"³⁴³ and better captures the notion that "the genres [of qualitative research and ethnography] are more enduring and more blurred than the moments model"³⁴⁴ suggests and that the nature of the "intertextual linkages" that have driven the development of qualitative research "deserve closer attention." Ultimately, Atkinson seeks to do the following:

By drawing on the characteristics and limitations of the moments model, we are able to re-present a less demarcated and more "messy" version of the development and direction of ethnography as an academic field and intellectual tradition...³⁴⁵ [and that] [r]ather than a developmental model, therefore, we would conceptualize the field of ethnography in terms of continuing tensions. Indeed, those tensions themselves give the field much of its vigor and impetus.³⁴⁶

³³⁷ Which in fact only identifies six "moments" as it was written in the 1990s.

³³⁸ Atkinson, Coffey, and Delamont, "Ethnography," 461.

³³⁹ Atkinson, Coffey, and Delamont, "Ethnography," 464.

³⁴⁰ Atkinson, Coffey, and Delamont, "Ethnography," 464.

³⁴¹ Atkinson, Coffey, and Delamont, "Ethnography," 464.

³⁴² Atkinson, Coffey, and Delamont, "Ethnography," 465.

³⁴³ Atkinson, Coffey, and Delamont, "Ethnography," 465.

³⁴⁴ Atkinson, Coffey, and Delamont, "Ethnography," 465.

³⁴⁵ Atkinson, Coffey, and Delamont, "Ethnography," 467.

³⁴⁶ Atkinson, Coffey, and Delamont, "Ethnography," 470.

Whilst Denzin and Lincoln do not engage with this article in the revised edition of their chapter, they do, however, use the work of Fredric Jameson³⁴⁷ to acknowledge “that any periodization hypothesis is always suspect”³⁴⁸ and that it is not always possible to discern the shift from one stage to another when tracing the development of research methodologies.³⁴⁹

The “fragmentation and diversity”³⁵⁰ of ethnography is most apparent in the past two decades as, owing to the challenges of the modern world, ethnography’s rate of change has increased exponentially. For example, the advent of radio, television, satellite communication, computer technology, the Internet, telephones, and a global media, have all led to the rise of the “Global Village”³⁵¹ where contact between once isolated civilisations is now almost instantaneous. Thus, the ease with which individuals can now access and communicate with the wider world and the challenges that this gives rise to have altered ethnography significantly since the days of the Malinowski. The notion of the field of ethnographic research has been particularly impacted. For example, how a researcher locates, accesses, communicates with (both during and after research), and even conceptualises, the field has been significantly impacted by advancements in modern technology. One consequence of this has been a rise in edited volumes that seek to interrogate the many challenges which conducting ethnographic research in the twenty-first century presents.³⁵²

³⁴⁷ See: Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991).

³⁴⁸ Denzin and Lincoln, “Introduction,” 16.

³⁴⁹ See: Denzin and Lincoln, “Introduction,” 16.

³⁵⁰ Atkinson, Coffey, and Delamont, “Ethnography,” 460.

³⁵¹ The term “Global Village” is widely attributed to the culture and media theorist Marshall McLuhan and references to the theory can be found in the following works: Marshall McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy* (London: University of Toronto Press, 2011), *Understanding Media* (London: Routledge Classics, 2001).

³⁵² For example, see: Vered Amit, ed., *Constructing the Field: Ethnographic Fieldwork in the Contemporary World* (London: Routledge, 2000) and James D. Faubion and George E. Marcus, eds. *Field-Work is Not What It Used to Be: Learning Anthropology’s Method in a Time of Transition* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009).

The Methodology and Method of Ethnography

If Clifford Geertz’s assertion that understanding “*what doing ethnography is*”³⁵³ is the essential starting point for understanding not only ethnography as a research methodology, but also the knowledge that this method produces, then it is pertinent that I now shift from discussing ethnography’s origins to interrogating exactly what ethnography is. Geertz’s own answer to this emphasises that the ethnographer should understand what s/he is doing as developing a “thick description”³⁵⁴ of the social world they are observing. The purpose of “thick description” is not just to describe human behaviour, but to explain such behaviour in relation to the context from which it arises so that it makes sense to an outsider. Geertz explains:

If an anthropological interpretation is constructing a reading of what happens, then to divorce it from what happens – from what, in this time or that place, specific people say, what they do, what is done to them, from the whole vast business of the world – is to divorce it from its applications and render it vacant.³⁵⁵

Geertz’s description of the purpose of ethnography as being the gathering of a “thick description” or “a densely layered cultural script”³⁵⁶ (as David Walsh describes it) of a particular culture, society, community, or people is now widely accepted as the defining feature of ethnography. “Thick description” plays the central role in enabling those external to a particular culture to understand the complex connection between human behaviour and the context in which such behaviour occurs.

³⁵³ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books Inc., 1973), 5-6.

³⁵⁴ See: Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 3-30.

³⁵⁵ Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 18.

³⁵⁶ David Walsh, “Doing Ethnography,” in *Researching Society and Culture*, ed. Clive Seale (London: SAGE, 2005), 225-238 (227).

It is, in fact, this very aspect of ethnography that has led me to determine that ethnography should become a compulsory prerequisite stage of CBS. For example, for an outsider to understand the contextual nuances of a contextually led biblical reading, and to be able to relate that reading to the contextual circumstances that have impacted upon its production, an outsider must first be aware of the various historical and contemporary socio-political and economic circumstances of the group that is producing the reading. To divorce a contextual reading from the lived and embodied realities of the reader and all the complexities of their contextual environment renders the reading vacant, in just the same way as Geertz asserts regarding recordings of anthropological observations being divorced from the realities in which they were observed. However, I will return to this later.

As we have already seen, ethnography's theoretical foundation primarily stems from when twentieth-century British anthropologists were "[f]aced with non-Western societies that largely possessed an oral culture."³⁵⁷ At this time, "anthropologists were encouraged by a perception of their diversity to take an attitude of cultural relativism, whereby the values and institutions of any given society were seen to have an internal logic of their own."³⁵⁸ Ultimately, "[a]nthropologists took the view that society and culture could only be studied from inside by the immersion of the researcher in the society under study."³⁵⁹

Walsh informs us that there are three essential aspects to ethnography: 1. There is "a constant interaction between problem formulation, data collection and data analysis,"³⁶⁰ so that that there are "*no distinct stages* of theorizing, hypothesis construction, data gathering and hypothesis testing"³⁶¹; 2. A variety of qualitative research techniques are used in countless combinations to collect data;³⁶² and, 3. The researcher is the "*primary research instrument*"³⁶³ as it is through their participant-observational role in the field that the entire research project is structured and conducted. For Walsh, it is "essentially the observer who stands at

³⁵⁷ Walsh, "Doing Ethnography," 226.

³⁵⁸ Walsh, "Doing Ethnography," 226.

³⁵⁹ Walsh, "Doing Ethnography," 226.

³⁶⁰ Walsh, "Doing Ethnography," 228.

³⁶¹ Walsh, "Doing Ethnography," 228.

³⁶² See: Walsh, "Doing Ethnography," 228.

³⁶³ Walsh, "Doing Ethnography," 228.

the heart of ethnography and of its open-ended nature.”³⁶⁴ The centrality of the researcher here has led to ethnographic researchers being labelled as “ethnographers” or “participant observers.” This results in ethnography becoming more than just a method; it is a philosophy and an attitude towards research that a researcher embodies.

Brewer uses this aspect of ethnography to argue that it should be understood as both a method and a methodology.³⁶⁵ He describes a method as being the “procedural rules for obtaining reliable and objective knowledge”³⁶⁶ that are often “presented in research textbooks.”³⁶⁷ Thus, the “procedural rules” of ethnography are the “number of particular data collection techniques, such as naturalistic observation, documentary analysis and in-depth interviews”³⁶⁸ that are employed to gather data. To ensure that the “procedural rules that lay down how [method] is properly done”³⁶⁹ they still need to be judged as legitimate and authoritative and it is the job of methodology to do this. Brewer therefore defines methodology as the “broader theoretical and philosophical framework for which researchers and scholars have a preference.”³⁷⁰ The methods that are deemed the “correct” way to do ethnography have gained that status because they fit with the underling methodology most commonly held by those working in this field. The research philosophy of the methodology of ethnography therefore determines what methods are deemed acceptable for conducting ethnographic research.³⁷¹

Ingold, however, uses the ethnographer’s centrality to the definition of the discipline as a point of critique. When questioning what ethnography is, Ingold lists the following as examples of where the term “ethnographic” is now routinely applied: “ethnographic encounter, ethnographic fieldwork, ethnographic method, ethnographic knowledge... ethnographic monographs, and ethnographic films... and ethnographic knowledge.”³⁷² In doing so, Ingold highlights that “[t]hrough all these

³⁶⁴ Walsh, “Doing Ethnography,” 228.

³⁶⁵ See: Brewer, *Ethnography*, 27-55.

³⁶⁶ Brewer, *Ethnography*, 27.

³⁶⁷ Brewer, *Ethnography*, 27.

³⁶⁸ Brewer, *Ethnography*, 27.

³⁶⁹ Brewer, *Ethnography*, 27.

³⁷⁰ Brewer, *Ethnography*, 27.

³⁷¹ See: Brewer, *Ethnography*, 28.

³⁷² Ingold, “That’s enough about Ethnography!” 384.

[examples] runs the ethnographer. Taking this as a primary dimension of identity, it would appear that everything the ethnographer turns his or her hand to is, *prima facie*, ethnographic."³⁷³ It deeply concerns Ingold that if it is the researcher that lies at the centre of ethnography's definition, then any research method can be deemed ethnographic, so long as the researcher conducting it identifies as an ethnographer.

This aside, the overall goal of any ethnographic study can ultimately be summarised as being the cultivation of a Geertzian "thick description" of those being observed. Similarly, it is generally through fieldwork and participant observation that this is achieved. A number of additional qualitative and quantitative methodologies may also be employed to complement and supplement these processes, such as individual and group interviews, questionnaires and surveys, and various visual-based methodologies. However, it is widely accepted that an ethnographic study containing no fieldwork or participant observation is not an ethnographic study, and it is this general understanding that has been applied in this research project.

This general description is what Brewer calls a "common sense"³⁷⁴ definition. Whilst Brewer makes no objection to understanding ethnography in this manner, he does, however, assert that such definitions should be nuanced. Brewer does this by creating two categories into which most examples of ethnography fit, namely "big" ethnography or "little" ethnography.³⁷⁵ "Big" ethnography is defined by Brewer "as a synonym for qualitative research as a whole, and virtually describes any approach as ethnographic that avoids surveys as a means of data collection."³⁷⁶ At the centre of "big" ethnography is a focus on utilising qualitative, not quantitative methodologies. Ultimately, Brewer describes "big" ethnography as "ethnography-understood-as-the-qualitative-method."³⁷⁷ A key proponent of this understanding of ethnography is Harry F. Wolcott, whose seminal *The Man in the Principal's Office* sought to advocate ethnographic research as a cultural

³⁷³ Ingold, "That's enough about Ethnography!" 384-385.

³⁷⁴ Brewer, *Ethnography*, 17.

³⁷⁵ See: Brewer, *Ethnography*, 17-19.

³⁷⁶ Brewer, *Ethnography*, 17.

³⁷⁷ Brewer, *Ethnography*, 18.

perspective on research, rather than any specific methodology for doing research.³⁷⁸

This understanding of ethnography as a catch-all term for all qualitative research has, however, been subject to widespread criticism. Ingold has openly lamented that such a definition "offends every principle of proper, rigorous anthropological inquiry"³⁷⁹ and asserts that "we are right to protest against it."³⁸⁰ Ingold thus advocates separating ethnography from the many other qualitative methods that have been subsumed under its banner, not to define what ethnography is, but to define "what is *not* ethnographic." Ingold identifies the following as not being examples of ethnography:

1. Encountering the world:³⁸¹ Ingold asserts that encountering the world cannot be considered ethnographic, as it is a fact of life that human beings encounter the world, and is thus not a unique academic discipline. Additionally, to align the retrospective act of ethnography with the in-the-present act of encountering the world consigns "the incipient – the about-to-happen in unfolding relationships – to the temporal past of the already over,"³⁸² which for Ingold, is impossible and decidedly rude;
2. Fieldwork:³⁸³ Ingold asserts that whilst both the field and the ethnographic can only exist retrospectively, this does not mean that the two are synonymous. For Ingold, fieldwork is no more intrinsic to ethnography than the act of encountering the world is, even though "[t]he conflation of ethnography with fieldwork is indeed one of the most common-place in the discipline,"³⁸⁴ a statement that has serious implications for fieldwork-based definitions of ethnography. This is because Ingold understands fieldwork to be the result of a series of encounters compounded together;³⁸⁵

³⁷⁸ See: Harry F. Wolcott, "A Principal Investigator in search of a Principal," in *The Man in the Principal's Office: An Ethnography* (Oxford: AltaMira Press, 2003), 1-18.

³⁷⁹ Ingold, "That's enough about Ethnography!" 384.

³⁸⁰ Ingold, "That's enough about Ethnography!" 384.

³⁸¹ See: Ingold, "That's enough about Ethnography!" 386-387.

³⁸² Ingold, "That's enough about Ethnography!" 386.

³⁸³ See: Ingold, "That's enough about Ethnography!" 386-387.

³⁸⁴ Ingold, "That's enough about Ethnography!" 386.

³⁸⁵ See: Ingold, "That's enough about Ethnography!" 386.

3. Participant-observation:³⁸⁶ Ingold identifies participant-observation as the most “tried and tested way of working”³⁸⁷ for anthropologists, but as this too is an in-the-present act, it cannot be ethnographic. Ingold argues that participant-observation should instead be understood as: an ontological perspective (as “to observe is not to objectify; it is to attend to persons and things, to learn from them, and to follow in precept and practice. Indeed there can be no observation without participation – that is, without an intimate coupling, in perception and action, of observer and observed”³⁸⁸); a means of education (as both education and participant-observation are practices of “exposure”³⁸⁹ that pull us away from any single standpoint and introduce us to many); a practice of correspondence (which is understood as the relationship that develops between researchers and research subjects – a relationship that is based upon attentiveness and responsiveness and that moves forward in time³⁹⁰); and finally, “a way of working.”³⁹¹

Ingold asserts that “[q]uite literally, [ethnography] means *writing about people*” (italics in original). It is thus a practice of “description,”³⁹² “judgement,”³⁹³ and “documentary”³⁹⁴ that retrospectively follows a study of the social world. Ingold therefore specifically defines ethnography as being the looking-back practice of writing-up research.

Ingold’s disapproval of how ethnography is used as a catch-all term for all qualitative methodologies is driven by his concerns for the future of anthropology. In particular, he blames the “ethnographizing”³⁹⁵ of anthropology for the shift of focus in the discipline “from engagement to reportage, from correspondence to description, from the co-imagining of possible futures to the characterization of

³⁸⁶ See: Ingold, “That’s enough about Ethnography!” 387-388.

³⁸⁷ Ingold, “That’s enough about Ethnography!” 386.

³⁸⁸ Ingold, “That’s enough about Ethnography!” 387-388.

³⁸⁹ Ingold, “That’s enough about Ethnography!” 389.

³⁹⁰ See: Ingold, “That’s enough about Ethnography!” 389-390.

³⁹¹ See: Ingold, “That’s enough about Ethnography!” 390-391.

³⁹² Ingold, “That’s enough about Ethnography!” 390.

³⁹³ Ingold, “That’s enough about Ethnography!” 386.

³⁹⁴ Ingold, “That’s enough about Ethnography!” 386.

³⁹⁵ Ingold, “That’s enough about Ethnography!” 392.

what is already past."³⁹⁶ Ultimately, Ingold argues that to consider everything in qualitative research as ethnographic is "doing great harm to anthropology"³⁹⁷ and that it leads to looking "through the wrong end of the telescope"³⁹⁸ or to a "back to front"³⁹⁹ anthropology. He concludes by stating that if anthropology is to flourish, the rupture between reality and imagination, as categorised by the descriptive, fact-based retrospective practice of ethnography and the philosophy of theory, must be repaired so that anthropology can become one single interstitial field.⁴⁰⁰

Whilst my own desire to define ethnography has not been driven by the same concerns and whilst I do not define ethnography in the same manner as Ingold, his discussion highlights how the boundaries, nature, and even existence of a discipline may be at the mercy of how the practices, processes, theories, and methodologies that lie at their core are understood.

Giampietro Gobo's work on ethnography has similarly sought to distinguish it from the other qualitative research methodologies that have become subsumed under its banner. For example, Gobo highlights that "case study,"⁴⁰¹ "fieldwork,"⁴⁰² and "participant observation"⁴⁰³ are three such methods that have been merged with ethnography. To emphasise his point, Gobo offers a succinct definition of each term:

The expression 'case study' denotes research on a system bounded in space and time and embedded in a particular physical and socio-cultural context... The term 'fieldwork' stresses the continuous presence of the researcher in the field, as opposed to 'grab-it-and-run' methodologies like the survey, in-depth interview or analysis of documents and recordings. In this case, too, diverse methodologies and methods may be used. Finally, 'participant observation' is a distinctive research strategy. Probably, participant observation and fieldwork treat observation as a mere technique, while the term 'ethnography' underlines the theoretical basis of such work stemming from a

³⁹⁶ Ingold, "That's enough about Ethnography!" 392.

³⁹⁷ Ingold, "That's enough about Ethnography!" 383.

³⁹⁸ Ingold, "That's enough about Ethnography!" 392.

³⁹⁹ Ingold, "That's enough about Ethnography!" 392.

⁴⁰⁰ See: Ingold, "That's enough about Ethnography!" 393.

⁴⁰¹ Giampietro Gobo, *Doing Ethnography: Introducing Qualitative Methods* (London: SAGE, 2008), 11.

⁴⁰² Gobo, *Doing Ethnography*, 11.

⁴⁰³ Gobo, *Doing Ethnography*, 11.

particular history and tradition. Thus, if on the one hand the terms are in some senses equivalent, on the other they connote different practices.⁴⁰⁴

Further to this, Gobo lists a number of additional methodologies that can also be utilised in qualitative research, namely: “individual or group interviews and documentary materials (diaries, letters, essays, organizational documents, newspapers, photographs and audiovisual aids.)”⁴⁰⁵ Whilst I am sympathetic to Gobo’s aim, I am inclined to assert that as each methodology is so similar in nature and has the same observational objective at its core, ethnography can be legitimately understood as a catch-all term for numerous qualitative practices. However, if a researcher wishes to use ethnography in this manner, then it would be beneficial if they overtly stated that they were doing so by utilising Brewer’s “big” definition of ethnography.

It is therefore only when a researcher is open about how they have used and understood ethnography (and what has come to inform that usage) that a researcher can avoid being swamped by the building methodological and ideological tensions and contradictions that are occurring in this field. For example, it could be argued that my engagement with the work of Ingold and Gobo undermines the way I have ultimately chosen to define and use ethnography. However, it is in fact the opposite. My open engagement with alternative approaches actually strengthens my decision to align myself with one particular definition of ethnography. It enables me to demonstrate that my decision is an informed one that acknowledges the validity and value of different standpoints and that I have chosen a particular definition as it aligns with both my research objectives and my existing ontology and epistemology. It is only by working in this transparent and reflexive manner that the tensions of competing and contradictory approaches can be managed.

The changing nature of the research methodologies that ethnography encompasses, as well as the diverse way in which ethnography is used and defined, is also reflected upon by Bryman. Bryman notes that ethnographic practice is in

⁴⁰⁴ Gobo, *Doing Ethnography*, 11 and 13.

⁴⁰⁵ Gobo, *Doing Ethnography*, 13.

“flux”⁴⁰⁶ and that since the 1970s the term seems to have become the preferred term of anthropologists and sociologists, over the previously more popular “participant observation.”⁴⁰⁷ Bryman concludes that although ethnography may be considered “a vibrant and highly flexible approach,”⁴⁰⁸ it is an increasing concern for the academy that the term is now becoming so loosely defined it may be “losing its original meaning.”⁴⁰⁹

Bryman proposes that in order to make ethnography distinct, the extent to which a researcher is immersed within the culture or context they are studying should be the defining factor of whether or not something is ethnographic. Ethnography therefore becomes a method that is defined by “a matter of degree.”⁴¹⁰ Thus it is becoming increasingly accepted that a researcher is only doing ethnography if they spend a significant amount of time immersed within a specific cultural setting.⁴¹¹ Bryman’s definition of ethnography by degree has informed my own definition as I agree that in order for a research project to be considered ethnographic, a researcher must immerse themselves as fully as possible for as long as possible in the culture being studied. I have not only spent a lifetime living within a coal-mining community, but for this specific project, I devoted a full year solely to researching male coal-mining culture in South Derbyshire.

Returning to Brewer’s “big” and “little” definitions of ethnography, Brewer describes “little” ethnography as being synonymous with fieldwork.⁴¹² “Little” ethnography is therefore “ethnography-understood-as-fieldwork”⁴¹³ and should be seen as one particular way of doing research. Brewer identifies Burgess as

⁴⁰⁶ Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, 464.

⁴⁰⁷ Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, 431.

⁴⁰⁸ Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, 464.

⁴⁰⁹ Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, 465.

⁴¹⁰ Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, 464-465.

⁴¹¹ Of course, such a definition is not without its own problems. For example, how long is long enough? What about researchers who are researching their “home” culture (just as I am)? And what about researchers who are researching a culture from a distance (something which is becoming increasingly common with the rise of communication technology)? I found Amit’s volume *Constructing the Field* very helpful in finding answers to such questions.

⁴¹² See: Brewer, *Ethnography*, 10.

⁴¹³ Brewer, *Ethnography*, 18.

exemplifying this definition of ethnography⁴¹⁴ and it is Burgess that has most significantly influenced my understanding of ethnography.

Burgess describes the “field” of research as being “circumscribed areas of study which have been the subject of social research.”⁴¹⁵ The style and method of research employed to study such fields utilises a multitude of different research methodologies that all have observation at their core. For example, Burgess describes such methods as “*fieldwork, ethnography, case study, qualitative research, interpretative procedures and field research*”⁴¹⁶ (italics in original). In contrast to how “big” ethnography functions, each of these different observational approaches evokes a different methodological concept, as each one places a different emphasis on a different aspect of both the research being conducted and the field being studied, which changes according to who is applying the method. For example, Burgess explains that amongst “social anthropologists *fieldwork* is synonymous with the collection of data using observational methods. However, for sociologists the term is also used to refer to a collection of data using a social survey”⁴¹⁷ (italics in original). When defining ethnography, Burgess (citing Harold C. Conklin) states that ethnography should be understood as data that is derived “from the direct observation of behaviour in a particular society. The making, reporting and evaluation of these observations is the task of ethnographers.”⁴¹⁸

Whilst Burgess acknowledges that there are a number of observational methodologies that can be drawn upon to collect field data, he proposes that the most significant methodology is participant-observation,⁴¹⁹ followed by interviewing as a means of investigation⁴²⁰ and the utilisation of personal documents.⁴²¹ Ultimately, Burgess asserts that whilst the “terminology that is, therefore, used to discuss our mode of research is very broad,”⁴²² the term “*field*

⁴¹⁴ Brewer, *Ethnography*, 18.

⁴¹⁵ Burgess, *In the Field*, 1.

⁴¹⁶ Burgess, *In the Field*, 2.

⁴¹⁷ Burgess, *In the Field*, 2.

⁴¹⁸ Burgess, *In the Field*, 2.

⁴¹⁹ See: Burgess, *In the Field*, 78-100.

⁴²⁰ See: Burgess, *In the Field*, 101-122.

⁴²¹ See: Burgess, *In the Field*, 123-142.

⁴²² Burgess, *In the Field*, 4.

research”⁴²³ (italics in original) is the most appropriate to use as it includes developments made by both anthropology and sociology. In addition to this, “field research” also provides space for the many theoretical, conceptual, and methodological differences that exist in research of this nature. Burgess’s “ethnography-as-fieldwork” definition therefore incorporates “participant observation, unstructured interviews and documentary methods.”⁴²⁴ Similarly, Brewer identifies ethnography as consisting of “naturalistic observation, documentary analysis and in-depth interviews.”⁴²⁵

Whilst Burgess emphasises that a researcher should consider the conceptual implications of the terminology they use, he also emphasises that “no matter which of these approaches are used they are not simply neat-fitting theoretical models that can be imposed on field situations and data.”⁴²⁶ Instead, Burgess advocates that we must be clear about what methodologies we are using and that we must also remember that by adhering to a specific methodology we are only being provided with an “orientation to field research”⁴²⁷ that can be “moulded and remoulded”⁴²⁸ according to the realities of the field. The field researcher is therefore a “methodological pragmatist”⁴²⁹ as they must continually modify their research according to the realities of the field. This acknowledgment of the fluctuating nature of both the field and method has been essential to how I have applied ethnography in this research project.

My own definition of ethnography therefore conforms to Brewer’s and Burgess’s definition of “little” ethnography, as I define it thus:

Ethnography is the study of people in naturally occurring settings or ‘fields’ by means of methods which capture their social meanings and ordinary activities, involving the researcher participating directly in the setting, if not also the activities, in order to collect data in a systematic manner but without meaning being imposed on them externally.⁴³⁰

⁴²³ Burgess, *In the Field*, 4.

⁴²⁴ Burgess, *In the Field*, 4.

⁴²⁵ Brewer, *Ethnography*, 27.

⁴²⁶ Burgess, *In the Field*, 4.

⁴²⁷ Burgess, *In the Field*, 4.

⁴²⁸ Burgess, *In the Field*, 4.

⁴²⁹ Burgess, *In the Field*, 5.

⁴³⁰ Brewer, *Ethnography*, 10.

Central to my definition is thus the requirement for the researcher to become a participant-observer out in the field and to immerse themselves as fully as possible in the every-day realities of the people being studied. My definition also recognises that in order for a researcher to do this adequately, a multitude of additional, complementary methodologies are also needed to enhance the depth and quality of the data being generated.

Finally, this definition has also been informed by Hammersley and Atkinson’s “liberal”⁴³¹ definition, which understands ethnography to be referring to “a particular method or set of methods.”⁴³² Thus, for Hammersley and Atkinson, “ethnography” means the following:

In its most characteristic form it involves the ethnographer participating, overtly or covertly, in people’s daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions – in fact, collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the focus of the research.⁴³³

Such a definition is often understood as describing the “essence of ethnography”⁴³⁴ whereby the researcher is “the primary research instrument”⁴³⁵ collecting data via participant-observation. Unlike Brewer, Burgess, and Ingold, who all seek to distinguish ethnography from general qualitative research, Hammersley and Atkinson emphasise that they are hesitant to “make any hard-and-fast distinction between ethnography and other sorts of qualitative enquiry.”⁴³⁶ Their hesitancy is rooted in the fact that views are now changing within social research about how the social world should be studied, which has resulted in tension between positivism and naturalism and thus quantitative and qualitative methodologies.

⁴³¹ Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson, *Ethnography: Principles in Practice* (London: Routledge, 2006), 1.

⁴³² Hammersley and Atkinson, *Ethnography*, 1.

⁴³³ Hammersley and Atkinson, *Ethnography*, 1.

⁴³⁴ Walsh, “Doing Ethnography,” 226.

⁴³⁵ Walsh, “Doing Ethnography,” 226.

⁴³⁶ Hammersley and Atkinson, *Ethnography*, 2.

Hammersley and Atkinson are more concerned with examining whether or not certain ways of viewing the social world (most notably, the constructivist approach) are compatible with the naturalistic foundations of ethnography.⁴³⁷ Thus their focus is upon describing qualitative research in light of its naturalistic canon. The ontological implications of this will be reserved for the following section of this chapter as I utilise a constructivist paradigm to understand both the social world and the role of the ethnographer. However, what I will instead concentrate upon here is the way in which Hammersley and Atkinson’s description of naturalism has informed my definition of ethnography.

Hammersley and Atkinson describe naturalism as having the following goal:

Naturalism proposes that, as far as possible, the social world be studied in its ‘natural’ state, undisturbed by the researcher. Hence, ‘natural’ not ‘artificial’ settings, like experiments or formal interviews, should be the primary source of data. Furthermore, the research must be carried out in ways that are sensitive to the nature of the setting. The primary aim should be to describe what happens in the setting, how the people involved see their own actions and those of others, and the contexts in which the action takes place.⁴³⁸

At the heart of ethnography is the acceptance that human actions cannot be understood as either simple causal responses or governed by universal laws, but that instead human actions are imbued with “social meanings: that is, by intentions, motives, beliefs, rules, and values.”⁴³⁹ Thus Hammersley and Atkinson assert that naturalism is the study of how people “interpret”⁴⁴⁰ the world around them and create meaning. It is this focus on interpretation that has also been central to my understanding of ethnography. My application of ethnography aims to show “fidelity to the phenomena under study”⁴⁴¹ and to develop a description of the particular set of meanings that are unique to the culture being studied, rather than searching for a universal law or grand theory.⁴⁴²

⁴³⁷ For the entirety of this examination, see: Hammersley and Atkinson, *Ethnography*, 1-22.

⁴³⁸ Hammersley and Atkinson, *Ethnography*, 6.

⁴³⁹ Hammersley and Atkinson, *Ethnography*, 7.

⁴⁴⁰ Hammersley and Atkinson, *Ethnography*, 7.

⁴⁴¹ Hammersley and Atkinson, *Ethnography*, 7.

⁴⁴² See: Hammersley and Atkinson, *Ethnography*, 10.

Atkinson’s most recent volume builds on his earlier work with Hammersley and further clarifies his understanding of ethnography as a collection of qualitative methods that enable the researcher to have “some form of participation in the everyday life of the social world under investigation.”⁴⁴³ However, whilst such a definition may sound vague, central to Atkinson’s definition is its emphasis on the importance of two things: fieldwork and its proper analysis. Atkinson summarises his commitment to fieldwork thus:

I do want to remind us that there is a world of difference between a commitment to long-term field research – spending time in one or more social settings, with a number of people as they go about their everyday lives – and the conduct of a few interviews or focus groups. The latter are ‘qualitative’ but they are certainly not ethnographic. It has become increasingly apparent that the term ‘ethnography’ is appropriated by and for research that is nothing of the kind. So while I do not wish to fetishise such things, I do insist on ethnographic fieldwork that involves some degree of direct participation and observation, and that it constitutes a radically distinctive way of understanding social activity *in situ*.⁴⁴⁴

Atkinson’s definition of ethnography is thus an “old fashioned”⁴⁴⁵ one, whereby extensive fieldwork lies at the heart of what ethnography is.

In *For Ethnography*, Atkinson devotes the central four chapters to discussing four key aspects of ethnographic research that all researchers working in this field should be concerned with, namely, “Interaction and Ceremonial Order,” “Accounts and Narratives,” “Aesthetics, Artefacts and Techniques,” and “Structuring Forms.”⁴⁴⁶ Atkinson argues that in order to pay each the attention they are due, a proper analysis of each aspect must be made. For example, Atkinson’s critical examination of interviewing—a method of data collection that he pays particularly close attention to—centres upon the following assertions: 1. That it is all too common for the data generated to be afforded “an almost unique status”⁴⁴⁷ or to

⁴⁴³ Paul Atkinson, *For Ethnography* (London: SAGE, 2015), 25.

⁴⁴⁴ Atkinson, *For Ethnography*, 3-4.

⁴⁴⁵ Atkinson, *For Ethnography*, 4.

⁴⁴⁶ See: Atkinson, *For Ethnography*, 92-108.

⁴⁴⁷ Atkinson, “Qualitative Research,” paragraph 8.

be considered as “conveying a special significance”⁴⁴⁸ because of the apparent pervasiveness of the method (this pervasiveness is thus equated to value); 2. That researchers often take the data generated during interviews at “face-value”⁴⁴⁹ as the method is perceived to grant the researcher “direct access to a realm of the personal that is not available through other means.”⁴⁵⁰

In response to this, Atkinson argues that a researcher should instead analyse interview data from a variety of perspectives, including how the interview may be a performance of shared cultural conventions. For example, he suggests that “[w]e should therefore, be studying narrative insofar as it is a particular feature of a given culture milieu”⁴⁵¹ and that we should “regard such accounts as social performance, or forms of social action, embedded within organisational contexts, and socially shared undertaking.”⁴⁵² Ultimately, Atkinson’s critique reminds us that not only are personal narratives one of many “structured performance[s] through which everyday life is enacted,”⁴⁵³ but also that interviewing is just one of many methods that should be utilised in conjunction with one another.

The latter point of this summary highlights Atkinson’s commitment to an ethnographic methodology that consists of many qualitative research methods. Atkinson is against an “essentially reductionist view”⁴⁵⁴ of methodology “that treats one type of data or one approach to analysis as being the prime source of social and cultural interpretation.”⁴⁵⁵ This “proper” analysis of both fieldwork and the data it generates is central to Atkinson’s definition of ethnography.

Ultimately, my understanding and application of ethnography has been shaped by many of the leading voices in this field. My own definition, which is an amalgamation of the various definitions previously cited, consists of four crucial parts: 1. For a study to be considered ethnographic, it must be conducted out in the field; 2. A researcher must devote as much time as possible to immersing

⁴⁴⁸ Atkinson, “Qualitative Research,” paragraph 8.

⁴⁴⁹ Atkinson, “Qualitative Research,” paragraph 8.

⁴⁵⁰ Atkinson, “Qualitative Research,” paragraph 8.

⁴⁵¹ Atkinson, “Qualitative Research,” paragraph 10.

⁴⁵² Atkinson, “Qualitative Research,” paragraph 12.

⁴⁵³ Atkinson, “Qualitative Research,” paragraph 13.

⁴⁵⁴ Atkinson, “Qualitative Research,” paragraph 4.

⁴⁵⁵ Atkinson, “Qualitative Research,” paragraph 4.

themselves in their field of study by living alongside those they wish to observe; 3. The primary means of conducting an ethnographic study is through participant-observation; 4. Whilst distinct methodologies for qualitative data collection do exist, a researcher conducting an ethnographic study should make use of all such methods to ensure that they are as well-equipped as possible to collect holistic data that reflects the richness and complexity of the realities of the context being researched. By being *in-situ* for a prolonged period of time in the field and by allowing distinct, yet complementary methods to merge, morph, and mutate into one another, a researcher is conducting a study that is ethnographic in nature.

This definition of ethnography has served me well in this research project, particularly because the context in which I was working was in a state of flux. The fluidity of my working definition of ethnography therefore enables a researcher to continue conducting an ethnographic study even when their field is changing, as their *in-situ* position ensures they can experience and witness change, which then allows them to respond methodologically to such changes and to adjust their research strategy accordingly. In the case of this research project, the changeable nature of the context I was studying was reflected in the changeable nature of my ethnographic method. My definition therefore embraces the “mess”⁴⁵⁶ of ethnographic research.

**I’m a Member. Hold on, I’m a Fan. No, Wait, I’m a Participant as Observer.
Actually, I don’t know who I am...**

As the practice of participant-observation is central to my definition of ethnography, it is pertinent that I examine what I mean by “participant-observation” and to what extent I both participated and observed during this study.

⁴⁵⁶ A term borrowed from John Law, see: John Law, “Making a Mess with Method,” *HeterogeneitiesDOTnet John Law’s STS Web Page*, 19 January 2006, <http://www.heterogeneities.net/publications/Law2006MakingaMesswithMethod.pdf>, *After Method: Mess in Social Science Research* (London: Routledge, 2004).

To do this, I will draw upon a range of definitions of participant-observation, as well as a number of different typologies of the participant-observer role, most notably, Raymond L. Gold’s⁴⁵⁷ and Buford H. Junker’s⁴⁵⁸ identification of the four-part typology of participant-observation.

Just like ethnography, participant-observation has its origins in twentieth-century British social anthropology and North American sociology. Its first appearance can be found in the works of Malinowski, Franz Boas, and Frank Hamilton Cushing (with the former working in Britain and the latter two working in North America), as well as in the many works produced by the Chicago School. However, unlike ethnography, the many definitions that exist of participant-observation are much more uniform.

Patricia A. Adler and Peter Adler assert that “[f]or as long as people have been interested in studying the social and natural world around them, observation has served as the bedrock source of human knowledge.”⁴⁵⁹ Thus they define observation as “the fundamental base of all research methods”⁴⁶⁰ used to study the social world. Adler and Adler note that participant-observation is “more widely recognised”⁴⁶¹ than just observation and that the vast majority of scholars who study the social world use participant-observation as their core methodology of qualitative enquiry.⁴⁶²

Kathleen M. DeWalt and Billie R. DeWalt define the goal of participant-observation as a means of developing “a holistic understanding of the phenomena under study that is as objective and accurate as possible given the limitations of the method”⁴⁶³ and that it involves “active looking, improving memory, informal interviewing, writing detailed field notes, and perhaps most importantly,

⁴⁵⁷ See: Raymond L. Gold, “Roles in Sociological Field Observation,” *Social Forces* 36/3 (1958): 217–223.

⁴⁵⁸ See: Buford H. Junker, *Field Work: An Introduction to the Social Sciences* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960).

⁴⁵⁹ Patricia A. Adler and Peter Adler, “Observational Techniques,” in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, eds. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (London: SAGE, 1994), 377–392 (377).

⁴⁶⁰ Adler and Adler, “Observational Techniques,” 389.

⁴⁶¹ Adler and Adler, “Observational Techniques,” 378.

⁴⁶² See: Adler and Adler, “Observational Techniques,” 378.

⁴⁶³ Kathleen M. DeWalt and Billie R. DeWalt, *Participant Observation: A Guide for Fieldworkers* (Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 2002), 92.

patience."⁴⁶⁴ Similarly, Stephen L. Schensul, Jean J. Schensul, and Margaret D. LeCompte define participant-observation as "the process of learning through exposure to or involvement in the day-to-day or routine activities of participants in the researcher setting."⁴⁶⁵

Equally, Danny L. Jorgensen defines participant-observation as follows:

[Participant-observation] focuses on human interaction and meaning viewed from the insiders' viewpoint in everyday life situations and settings. It aims to generate practical and theoretical truths formulated as interpretative theories. The methodology of participant observation involves a flexible, open-ended, opportunist process and logic of inquiry through which what is studied constantly is subject to redefinition based on field experience and observation. Participant observation generally is practiced as a form of case study that concentrates on in-depth description and analysis of some phenomenon and phenomena. Participation is a strategy for gaining access to otherwise inaccessible dimensions of human life and experience. Direct observation and experience are primary forms and methods of data collection, but the researcher also may conduct interviews, collect documents, and use other methods of gathering information.⁴⁶⁶

And finally, Brewer defines participant-observation as "data gathering by means of participation in the daily life of informants in their natural setting: watching, observing and talking to them in order to discover their interpretations, social meanings and activities."⁴⁶⁷ The purpose of this "close involvement and association"⁴⁶⁸ with a particular group of people is to not only provide a researcher with an accurate picture of the mundane realities of a particular culture, "but also to add the dimension of personally experiencing and sharing the same everyday life as those under study."⁴⁶⁹ Brewer further defines participant-observation by dividing it into two distinct ways it can be used to study the social world: 1. "[T]o understand the world as it is seen by

⁴⁶⁴ DeWalt and DeWalt, *Participant Observation*, vii.

⁴⁶⁵ Stephen L. Schensul, Jean J. Schensul, and Margaret D. LeCompte, *Essential Ethnographic Methods: Observations, Interviews, and Questionnaires* (Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 1999), 91.

⁴⁶⁶ Danny L. Jorgensen, *Participant Observation: A Methodology for Human Studies* (London: SAGE, 1983), 23.

⁴⁶⁷ Brewer, *Ethnography*, 59.

⁴⁶⁸ Brewer, *Ethnography*, 59.

⁴⁶⁹ Brewer, *Ethnography*, 59.

those acting within it;”⁴⁷⁰ and, 2. “[T]o reveal the taken-for-granted, common-sense nature of that everyday world itself.”⁴⁷¹ It is the former that has been the focus of my study, which Brewer identifies as the “traditional usage”⁴⁷² of participant-observation.

Ultimately, I have understood and applied participant-observation as an intensive and long-term method of qualitative research that has the primary aim of providing a researcher with the opportunity to gain a close and intimate familiarity with a particular group of individuals. In doing so, a researcher is then able to not only create a thorough record of this group’s social world, including their day-to-day practices, methods of meaning making, and overall worldview, but through insider access, is also better able to comprehend and understand that worldview.

However, when implementing a participant-observation-based research methodology, it is essential to remember that the extent to which a researcher may participate/observe always differs, which is often a result of the specific research project at hand. We must therefore consider what “characteristic posture”⁴⁷³ or role a researcher adopts when forming a relationship with those they seek to study when utilising participant-observation.

Numerous typologies have been developed to aid a researcher in determining the level to which they participate/observe when in the field. One prominent example is the typology developed first by Junker and then expanded by Gold.⁴⁷⁴ The four distinct roles that Junker describe are as follows: 1. the complete participant;⁴⁷⁵ 2. the participant as observer;⁴⁷⁶ 3. the observer as participant;⁴⁷⁷ 4. the complete observer.⁴⁷⁸ The “complete participant” is primarily understood as being a covert role where the researcher withholds the fact that they are conducting research. This role raises a number of issues, particularly around

⁴⁷⁰ Brewer, *Ethnography*, 60.

⁴⁷¹ Brewer, *Ethnography*, 60.

⁴⁷² Brewer, *Ethnography*, 60.

⁴⁷³ Elfreda A. Chatman, “Field Research: Methodological Themes,” *Library and Information Science Research* 6/4 (1984): 425–438 (429).

⁴⁷⁴ See: Junker, *Field Work*, Gold, “Roles in Sociological Field Observations.”

⁴⁷⁵ See: Junker, *Field Work*, 35–36.

⁴⁷⁶ See: Junker, *Field Work*, 36–37.

⁴⁷⁷ See: Junker, *Field Work*, 37.

⁴⁷⁸ See: Junker, *Field Work*, 37–39.

consent and the depth of knowledge being collected. The “participant as observer” role is much more overt as the researcher is open about the fact they are conducting research. What makes this role unique, however, is that the researcher may be closely involved in the social situation underway and that they may develop intense relationships with the individuals they are studying, but a distinct attempt is made to remain detached from the situation and to more closely observe than participate. This role is the most frequently adopted in social scientific research.

The “observer as participant” is also an overt role, but this time the researcher does not seek to develop an intense relationship with those being researched. The “complete observer” role removes the researcher entirely from any form of participation in the social world being studied. This can be an overt or covert role, depending on the researcher’s needs. It is common for all four roles to be used interchangeably during a research project as different roles can assist with collecting different types of data.

Van Maanen similarly identifies four participant-observation typologies: the “fan,” an overt researcher intensely interested in observing and participating in the social world they are studying as it happens;⁴⁷⁹ the “voyeur,” a covert, but passive researcher that enjoys experiencing the social work of those they are studying;⁴⁸⁰ the “member,” an overt researcher who is a member of the community s/he is studying and is widely accepted by other members;⁴⁸¹ and the “spy,” a covert researcher who is active in the research setting, yet withholds the fact that s/he is a researcher.⁴⁸²

Adler and Adler also describe the various membership roles that a researcher can hold in relation to their research subjects, these include: “peripheral membership,” where the focus is on observing rather than participating;⁴⁸³ “active membership,” where the researcher is able to actively participate in everything

⁴⁷⁹ See: John Van Maanen, “Epilogue: On Watching the Watchers,” in *Policing: A View from the Streets*, eds., Peter K. Manning and John Van Maanen (New York: Random House, 1978), 309-349 (343-346).

⁴⁸⁰ See: Van Maanen, *Policing*, 343-346.

⁴⁸¹ See: Van Maanen, *Policing*, 343-346.

⁴⁸² See: Van Maanen, *Policing*, 343-346.

⁴⁸³ See: Patricia A. Adler and Peter Adler, *Membership Roles in Field Research* (London: SAGE: 1987), 36-49.

they observe;⁴⁸⁴ and “full membership,” where a researcher is accepted by the group they are studying and is thus fully able to participate in their social world.⁴⁸⁵

And finally, Brewer identifies a further four types of participant-observation, which he titles: “pure participant observation;”⁴⁸⁶ “variation of participant observation;”⁴⁸⁷ “pure observant participation;”⁴⁸⁸ and “variation of observant participation.”⁴⁸⁹ Brewer’s typology is also determined by the extent to which a researcher already knows the community, group, or culture they are studying. For example, the traditional form of participant-observation (which Brewer designates “pure”)⁴⁹⁰ is where a researcher adopts “a new role to study an unfamiliar group in a strange setting.”⁴⁹¹ A variant of this role is when a researcher chooses to adopt “a new role to research a familiar situation,” a role which is a “variation of participant observation.”⁴⁹² However, if a researcher chooses to research a familiar setting and adopt an existing role they are using “pure observant participation.”⁴⁹³ A variation of this role is if the researcher is unfamiliar with the setting they wish to study, yet still chooses to utilise an existing role, thus using a “variation of observant participation.”⁴⁹⁴

I identify as a combination of the following: 1. Junker’s “participant as observer” because I was open about the fact that I was conducting research, but I also gained access to those I was studying because I was already part of that social setting and had a reason for both being there and conducting my research; 2. a cross between Van Maanen’s “member” and “fan” statuses because even though I am a “member” of the group I sought to study, a degree of distance also exists

⁴⁸⁴ See: Adler and Adler, *Membership Roles in Field Research*, 50-66.

⁴⁸⁵ See: Adler and Adler, *Membership Roles in Field Research*, 67-84. All three of these roles can also be found in their 1994 paper “Observational Techniques.” See: Adler and Adler, “Observational Techniques,” 379-380.

⁴⁸⁶ Brewer, *Ethnography*, 61.

⁴⁸⁷ Brewer, *Ethnography*, 61.

⁴⁸⁸ Brewer, *Ethnography*, 61.

⁴⁸⁹ Brewer, *Ethnography*, 61.

⁴⁹⁰ Brewer, *Ethnography*, 60.

⁴⁹¹ Brewer, *Ethnography*, 60.

⁴⁹² Brewer, *Ethnography*, 61.

⁴⁹³ Brewer, *Ethnography*, 61.

⁴⁹⁴ Brewer, *Ethnography*, 61. Here, Brewer cites the example of Stanley Cohen and Laurie Taylor, as they adopted the familiar roles of teachers, but in the unfamiliar setting of a prison. See: Brewer, *Ethnography*, 61 and Stanley Cohen and Laurie Taylor, *Psychological Survival* (London: Penguin, 1972).

between those I studied and myself as I am not a direct "member" of the coal-mining industry. I therefore also identify as a "fan" as I am desperately keen to learn as much as possible about the closed, male-dominated world of this industry;

3. a cross between Brewer's "variation of participant observation" and "pure observant participation" because I conducted my research in a familiar setting whilst holding the dual roles of a working-class woman belonging to a coal-mining family and community (my existing role) and a postgraduate researcher (my new role). I found Adler and Adler's typology difficult to apply to my research as my position as a "member" of the coal-mining community is layered and is not just determined by other members.

Critiquing Ethnography

I will begin my more critical analysis of ethnography by considering the tensions that exist within its central commitment to phenomenism. As we have already seen, what marks ethnography as a distinct method of inquiry is its commitment to recognising and rejoicing in the complex nature of the social world. This commitment is achieved by acknowledging the importance of paying close attention and staying true to the phenomena of the social world as it occurs and as we witness it. It is this that lies at the heart of qualitative inquiry. However, this commitment leaves qualitative researchers in a quandary, as in order to express the complexity of the social world, they must render this complexity coherent in a theoretical account.⁴⁹⁵

Respect for the complexity of the social world has often been used as the qualitative researcher's trump card for demonstrating the authority of a naturalistic approach to studying human interaction.⁴⁹⁶ Such assertions are a product of the naturalistic approach's emphasis on phenomenism or the capturing of social

⁴⁹⁵ See: Martyn Hammersley, *Questioning Qualitative Inquiry: Critical Essays* (London: SAGE, 2008), 45.

⁴⁹⁶ See: Hammersley, *Questioning Qualitative Inquiry*, 39.

phenomena as lived experience.⁴⁹⁷ The basis of this assertion lies in two key assessments of the nature of the social world: 1. That it is culturally diverse;⁴⁹⁸ 2. That it is processual in character.⁴⁹⁹ Interpretation thus plays a highly influential role in how human beings act in, and understand, the world. Such a reality renders any attempt to structure, categorise, and theorise lived experience “futile.”⁵⁰⁰ However, as qualitative research seeks to capture this complexity, it inevitably practices what it seeks to preach against, namely, the organisation, categorisation, and theoretical abstraction and data reduction of social phenomena.⁵⁰¹ Thus, from the onset, those conducting such research are caught in an impossible situation whereby they wish to “portray the world as it is in all its diversity and complexity,”⁵⁰² but at the same time have to render this complexity “down into some coherent and stable representation.”⁵⁰³

Whilst this may appear to be a single tension, Hammersley argues that there are actually two tensions at work here, with the first being the tension between complexity and comprehension and the second being the tension between qualitative inquiry and “‘news’”⁵⁰⁴ or new knowledge, the production of which is impossible without the utilisation of theory, including the application of concepts such as age, gender, ethnicity and so on.⁵⁰⁵

Hammersley highlights three ways in which ethnographers have sought to alleviate such tensions:

1. Re-specifying the purpose of such inquiries to focus upon giving a voice to the marginalised;⁵⁰⁶
2. Writing in a more literary manner (which is closer to natural speech);⁵⁰⁷

⁴⁹⁷ See: Hammersley, *Questioning Qualitative Inquiry*, 40.

⁴⁹⁸ See: Hammersley, *Questioning Qualitative Inquiry*, 41-42.

⁴⁹⁹ See: Hammersley, *Questioning Qualitative Inquiry*, 42-44.

⁵⁰⁰ Hammersley, *Questioning Qualitative Inquiry*, 44.

⁵⁰¹ See: Hammersley, *Questioning Qualitative Inquiry*, 44.

⁵⁰² Hammersley, *Questioning Qualitative Inquiry*, 45.

⁵⁰³ Hammersley, *Questioning Qualitative Inquiry*, 45.

⁵⁰⁴ Hammersley, *Questioning Qualitative Inquiry*, 46.

⁵⁰⁵ See: Hammersley, *Questioning Qualitative Inquiry*, 46-47.

⁵⁰⁶ See: Hammersley, *Questioning Qualitative Inquiry*, 47.

⁵⁰⁷ See: Hammersley, *Questioning Qualitative Inquiry*, 46.

3. The utilisation of the researcher’s self in the research.⁵⁰⁸

Hammersley, however, proposes that the best way to address such tensions is to no longer pit phenomenism and essentialism as two polar extremes, but to instead utilise a “*mix of*”⁵⁰⁹ the two. Using the work of David Matza, Paul Rock, and Jacques Derrida, Hammersley asserts that what is needed is instead “an approach that analyses, but nevertheless respects the relevant complexity of, the social world.”⁵¹⁰ Two approaches that Hammersley identifies as being capable of doing this are thick description⁵¹¹ and analytic induction.⁵¹² It is the former that has played a key role in this research project.

Whilst Hammersley is not entirely convinced that thick description is the solution to such tensions, he does assert that it is still of immense value to ethnography and that it is “stimulating and illuminating.”⁵¹³ The tensions raised by Hammersley have guided me to think more closely about not only what I mean by ethnography, but also the implications of choosing to work in this manner. For example, Hammersley’s reflections on the need to rethink the polarisation of essentialism and phenomenism has enabled me to feel less guilty about the possibility of deriving theory from my data—something that I am deeply averse to doing. Similarly, his highlighting of the ways in which other researchers have sought to alleviate such tensions has confirmed to me that my natural instinct on managing such tensions was correct, as I have sought to utilise all three potential solutions when writing this thesis.

Similar to this critique is the realist critique, which asserts that ethnographic accounts can never describe the world as it literally is and that what ethnographers really produce are merely their own constructions or interpretations of what they have witnessed. This conflicts with the assertion that naturalistic realism is the foundation of ethnographic enquiry. For example, if it is widely accepted that the

⁵⁰⁸ See: Hammersley, *Questioning Qualitative Inquiry*, 47.

⁵⁰⁹ Hammersley, *Questioning Qualitative Inquiry*, 47.

⁵¹⁰ Hammersley, *Questioning Qualitative Inquiry*, 47.

⁵¹¹ See: Hammersley, *Questioning Qualitative Inquiry*, 52-68.

⁵¹² See: Hammersley, *Questioning Qualitative Inquiry*, 69-88.

⁵¹³ Hammersley, *Questioning Qualitative Inquiry*, 68.

purpose of ethnography is to report as literally and truthfully as possible social phenomena, what happens when all such reports instead concern how a researcher has interpreted or constructed the social phenomena at hand? Thus the realist critique reveals a deep tension within ethnography.⁵¹⁴ Hammersley and Atkinson relieve this tension by proposing that whilst there may be a “real” world out there, human beings only ever access or understand it via interpretation, thus it is a subtle realism. If we, as researchers, combine this with reflexivity, then constructivism and realism can be brought together.⁵¹⁵

The next, most common critique levied against ethnography is the “common sense”⁵¹⁶ critique. Brewer’s explanation of this begins with a description of one of the biggest positives of ethnographic research, namely that it “begins with a subject matter that is intrinsically interesting to many people; ordinary people in the street want to know about the things sociology knows about.”⁵¹⁷ However, whilst Brewer believes that this is “a tremendous advantage”⁵¹⁸ for ethnography, it also acts as a double-edged sword as the fact that the subject matter of ethnography lies in the realms of the social world, to which all people have access, means it “sometimes competes with ordinary common-sense views of the same things.”⁵¹⁹ The explanations of the social world that ethnographers produce can therefore readily be challenged by everyone, as every human being produces their own explanation of the world based upon their own experiences of it. Ethnographic accounts therefore “have to confront habitual common-sense beliefs about phenomena that are often wrong and resistant to change.”⁵²⁰

Proponents of the “common sense” critique question why we need ethnographers if the knowledge they report of the world confirms the knowledge we already have. Similarly, if the knowledge reported contradicts what we already

⁵¹⁴ See: Hammersley and Atkinson, *Ethnography*, 11.

⁵¹⁵ See: Hammersley and Atkinson, *Ethnography*, 17-19.

⁵¹⁶ See: Brewer, *Ethnography*, 13-15.

⁵¹⁷ Brewer, *Ethnography*, 14.

⁵¹⁸ Brewer, *Ethnography*, 14.

⁵¹⁹ Brewer, *Ethnography*, 14.

⁵²⁰ Brewer, *Ethnography*, 14.

know then the knowledge being reported must be incorrect. Ethnographic research is therefore written-off as either stating the obvious or being inaccurate.⁵²¹

The “common sense” critique also gives rise to the accusation that ethnographic research is little more than “mere journalism.”⁵²² For example, Brewer informs us that when ethnographic research is understood as merely reportage of already known “common-sense” knowledge, it’s studies are reduced to little more than “highly descriptive and non-analytic accounts of people droning on about this or that topic, with so-and-so saying this followed by so-and-so saying that.”⁵²³ A more savage version of this critique is the accusation that ethnographic research is “tabloid journalism”⁵²⁴ as it only ever reports the “exotically unusual, the peculiar, odd and strange.”⁵²⁵ Both the “common-sense” critique and the “journalism” critique are driven by the widely-held notion that “real” research must be of a quantitative nature and numerically based.⁵²⁶

The notion that qualitative research is not “real” research underpins the majority of the critiques made of ethnography. For example, one of the most significant critiques made of ethnography is the natural science’s overall critique of the social sciences. This critique is first and foremost the accusation that ethnography (and all other qualitative research) falls short of the standards of “real” research, which is generally understood as being the scientific method of research. Brewer argues that there are four significant factors of ethnography that give rise to this criticism: 1. It “focuses on people’s ordinary activities in naturally occurring settings”⁵²⁷; 2. The method “uses unstructured and flexible methods of data collection”,⁵²⁸ 3. The prominent role the researcher plays in the research process;⁵²⁹ 4. That ethnography “explores the meaning which this activity has for people and the wider society.”⁵³⁰

⁵²¹ See: Brewer, *Ethnography*, 14-15.

⁵²² Brewer, *Ethnography*, 15.

⁵²³ Brewer, *Ethnography*, 15.

⁵²⁴ Brewer, *Ethnography*, 15.

⁵²⁵ Brewer, *Ethnography*, 15.

⁵²⁶ See: Brewer, *Ethnography*, 16.

⁵²⁷ Brewer, *Ethnography*, 20.

⁵²⁸ Brewer, *Ethnography*, 20.

⁵²⁹ See: Brewer, *Ethnography*, 20.

⁵³⁰ Brewer, *Ethnography*, 20.

The four fundamental principles that form the core of ethnography therefore result in ethnography breaching natural science's criteria of what is considered "real" research. This has led to those working in the social sciences responding to this accusation in one of three ways: 1. By defending the natural science model of research;⁵³¹ 2. By rejecting the natural science model;⁵³² 3. By transcending the research model dichotomy and developing new models as the foundation for conducting social scientific research.⁵³³ However, ethnography's attempts to respond to this critique have led to the identification of an even more problematic critique, that of the "postmodern critique." I will not, however, interrogate the postmodern critique here as it will instead be fully addressed in the following subsection, which focuses upon my ontological and epistemological positions and how they have been influenced by post-postmodernism.

In relation to the four fundamental principles of qualitative research identified by Brewer, the third principle, which identifies the prominent role the researcher plays in the research process, has been identified by Hammersley and Atkinson as being the source of a further critique known as the "political" critique, which asserts that the impact and influence of a researcher's own biases on the production of an ethnographic study undermines any data or knowledge they offer.⁵³⁴ For example, Hammersley asserts that ethnography has the potential to be ideologically driven if researchers do not acknowledge the theoretical frameworks and values they bring to their work. Thus, "[i]n framing descriptions, then, we cannot be concerned solely with truth: what is to be included in the description must also be determined by assumptions about what is relevant."⁵³⁵ A researcher must therefore be transparent about their personal and intellectual biases, their motivations for conducting research, and their values. A researcher must make explicit their decisions on relevancy and "justify them where necessary."⁵³⁶ Hammersley's method of choice to ensure transparency is reflexivity.

⁵³¹ See: Brewer, *Ethnography*, 21-22.

⁵³² See: Brewer, *Ethnography*, 22-23.

⁵³³ See: Brewer, *Ethnography*, 23-24.

⁵³⁴ See: Hammersley and Atkinson, *Ethnography*, 14-16.

⁵³⁵ Martyn Hammersley, "What's Wrong with Ethnography? The Myth of Theoretical Description," *Sociology* 24/4 (1990): 597-615 (607).

⁵³⁶ Hammersley, "What's Wrong with Ethnography?" 607.

Brewer has a similar focus when examining how ethnographers are now critiquing ethnography, which he fittingly calls the "ethnographic critique of ethnography."⁵³⁷ Brewer identifies two specific criticisms: 1. The questioning of the "reliability of ethnographic descriptions";⁵³⁸ 2. The deconstructing of the "ethnographic text by showing it to be a social artefact."⁵³⁹ The first of these two criticisms developed from the realisation that ethnographic findings cannot be generalised (and when ethnographers do make generalisations, they cannot evidence such claims),⁵⁴⁰ are theoretically naïve (as "they neither adequately test nor generate theory"),⁵⁴¹ and that often researchers "give no attention to the social processes that impinge upon and influence their data"⁵⁴² leading to the over-exaggeration of the strengths of data and the denial of its weaknesses.⁵⁴³

The second of these criticisms draws upon the work of Atkinson on the writing of ethnographic texts. Citing Atkinson, Brewer asserts that to avoid deconstructing the ethnographic text avoids recognising and analysing how such texts have established their authority (and, by extension, how the researcher has established their own authority) and the social processes that have been involved in the production of the text.⁵⁴⁴ I will not elaborate on this aspect further here, as the generally accepted response to this criticism is for the researcher to adopt a reflexive working practice and I have already thoroughly examined this.

Ultimately, these two criticisms can be used to defend ethnography and to address how it can be better put to use. Brewer argues that as these two criticisms can be interpreted as ethnography being "like the Emperor at last stripped of clothes,"⁵⁴⁵ we should in fact see them as affording ethnography with the opportunity to reconstruct itself, thus giving "instructions to the Emperor as to where to find a good tailor rather than a sentence to perpetual nakedness."⁵⁴⁶

⁵³⁷ John D. Brewer, "The Ethnographic Critique of Ethnography: Sectarianism in the RUC," *Sociology* 28/1 (1994): 231-244 (232).

⁵³⁸ Brewer, "The Ethnographic Critique of Ethnography," 233.

⁵³⁹ Brewer, "The Ethnographic Critique of Ethnography," 233.

⁵⁴⁰ See: Brewer, "The Ethnographic Critique of Ethnography," 233.

⁵⁴¹ Brewer, "The Ethnographic Critique of Ethnography," 233.

⁵⁴² Brewer, "The Ethnographic Critique of Ethnography," 233.

⁵⁴³ See: Brewer, "The Ethnographic Critique of Ethnography," 233.

⁵⁴⁴ See: Brewer, "The Ethnographic Critique of Ethnography," 234.

⁵⁴⁵ Brewer, "The Ethnographic Critique of Ethnography," 234.

⁵⁴⁶ Brewer, "The Ethnographic Critique of Ethnography," 235.

How my Research Question and Commitment to Reflexivity Drove my Methodological Choices: Defining my Ontological and Epistemological Positions

This research project’s central question and the methods chosen to investigate and answer it developed as direct products of the assumptions that I, the researcher, hold about “the nature of social phenomena”⁵⁴⁷ and “the proper ways to investigate such phenomena.”⁵⁴⁸ This meant that before I even set foot in the field, my personal ontological and epistemological assumptions were already determining the direction of my research as “methodologies and research questions are inevitably theoretically informed.”⁵⁴⁹ In other words, a researcher cannot begin to conduct research without first having assumptions about the nature of research, knowledge, and the world that surrounds them. A researcher may well instinctively and unthinkingly gravitate towards a particular worldview, but in order for research to be done well, a researcher must then work to articulate, unpack, and interrogate their worldview, making transparent the influence and impact their personal theoretical biases have had upon their research.

Jennifer Mason and Angela Dale assert that whilst some researchers may make explicit the social world they envisage, and thus their ontological and epistemological assumptions, often this acknowledgement is “more implicit or taken-for-granted”⁵⁵⁰ and readers have to rely upon “the language and vocabulary used”⁵⁵¹ to infer the ontological and epistemological models that have driven the research. To highlight just how many diverse ontological and epistemological

⁵⁴⁷ David Silverman, *Doing Qualitative Research: A Practical Handbook* (London: SAGE, 2010), 101.

⁵⁴⁸ Silverman, *Doing Qualitative Research*, 101.

⁵⁴⁹ Silverman, *Doing Qualitative Research*, 103.

⁵⁵⁰ Jennifer Mason and Angela Dale, “Creative Tensions in Social Research: Questions of Method,” in *Understanding Social Research: Thinking Creatively about Method*, eds. Jennifer Mason and Angela Dale (London: SAGE, 2011), 1-26 (3).

⁵⁵¹ Mason and Dale, “Creative Tensions in Social Research,” 3.

perspectives exist within social scientific research, Mason and Dale outline seven different "ontological dimensions,"⁵⁵² or "worlds," that take centre stage within their particular volume: "[a] world of stories and interpretations,"⁵⁵³ "[a] world of socio-architectural structures,"⁵⁵⁴ "[a] world of individuals or humans,"⁵⁵⁵ "[a] world of behaviours, actions and events,"⁵⁵⁶ "[a]n environmental, non-human or sensory world,"⁵⁵⁷ "[a] world of relationalities, connections and situations,"⁵⁵⁸ "[t]he world as a singular and coherent entity, or as multiple and non-cohering?"⁵⁵⁹ To be explicit and transparent about the assumptions and values that have driven my research, I will now unpack the social world I envision, thus making overt the theoretical foundations that underpin this project, as well as how they have shaped my decision to utilise both reflexivity and ethnography.

My ontological position, with ontology being understood to mean the "worldviews and assumptions in which researchers operate in their search for new knowledge,"⁵⁶⁰ is that of a post-postmodern constructivist. This approach rejects the realist notion of an independent objective reality and instead favours a multiplicitous understanding of reality whereby reality is continuously re/deconstructed by each individual according to personal experience and subjective interpretation. My understanding and application of this ontological position, as well as post-postmodernism's ability to respond to postmodernism's most prominent critiques of constructivist or naturalist ontological models, is directly influenced by Brewer.

A constructivist ontological position has been understood and applied in this research as one that views "knowledge and truth as created not discovered by the

⁵⁵² Mason and Dale, "Creative Tensions in Social Research," 3.

⁵⁵³ Mason and Dale, "Creative Tensions in Social Research," 4-5.

⁵⁵⁴ Mason and Dale, "Creative Tensions in Social Research," 5-7.

⁵⁵⁵ Mason and Dale, "Creative Tensions in Social Research," 7-8.

⁵⁵⁶ Mason and Dale, "Creative Tensions in Social Research," 8-10.

⁵⁵⁷ Mason and Dale, "Creative Tensions in Social Research," 10-12.

⁵⁵⁸ Mason and Dale, "Creative Tensions in Social Research," 12-13.

⁵⁵⁹ Mason and Dale, "Creative Tensions in Social Research," 13-15.

⁵⁶⁰ Yvonna S. Lincoln, Susan A. Lynham, and Egon G. Guba, "Paradigmatic Controversies, Contradictions, and Emerging Confluence, Revisited," in *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*, eds., Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (London: SAGE, 2011), 97-128 (102).

mind"⁵⁶¹ and "proposes that each individual mentally constructs the world of experience through cognitive processes."⁵⁶² Whilst a constructivist, and particularly a social constructivist, "can believe that concepts are constructed rather than discovered yet maintain that they correspond to something real in the world," my research does not accept that a "real world" independently exists externally from the human mind. The primary implication of this assertion is that society is therefore entirely constructed, both individually and collectively, an assertion which will be unpacked in greater detail shortly when I address the postmodern attack on constructivism.

In addition to asserting that each individual constructs their social world, I also wish to stress that an ethnographic study, and subsequently the ethnographic text that purports to offer an account of a specific social world, is equally constructed, as it is reflective of the socio-historical position of the researcher and the influence their biases have had upon how they have witnessed and understood the social world under observation.⁵⁶³

Thus, for a constructivist, "realities are multiple"⁵⁶⁴ and the aim of any constructivist approach is to gather an "interpretative understanding"⁵⁶⁵ of the world. Because of this, in a constructivist ontology "generalizations remain partial, conditional, and situated. Moreover, generalizations are not neutral... interpretation is inherently political."⁵⁶⁶

Yvonna S. Lincoln, Susan A. Lynham, and Egon G. Guba's tabulations of the many paradigms that exist within social scientific research and their implications for method, data production and analysis, and ethics have been particularly helpful in facilitating how I have come to define my ontological and epistemological positions, as well as confirming to me that the data collection methodologies I chose to utilise during this project were suited to my understanding of knowledge and reality.

⁵⁶¹ Tom Andrews, "What is Social Constructionism?" *Grounded Theory Review: An International Journal* 11/1 (2012): n.p.

⁵⁶² Andrews, "What is Social Constructionism?" n.p.

⁵⁶³ See: Hammersley and Atkinson, *Ethnography*, 13.

⁵⁶⁴ Kathy Charmaz, "Grounded Theory Methods in Social Justice Research," in *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*, eds., Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (London: SAGE, 2011), 359-380 (366).

⁵⁶⁵ Charmaz, "Grounded Theory Methods in Social Justice Research," 366.

⁵⁶⁶ Charmaz, "Grounded Theory Methods in Social Justice Research," 366.

Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba describe the constructivist ontology as being based on a relativist understanding of reality whereby “[r]ealities exist in the form of multiple mental constructions, socially and experientially based, local and specific, dependant for their form and content in the person who hold them.”⁵⁶⁷ Ultimately, Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba define constructivist ontology as accepting that “we construct knowledge through our lived experiences and through our interactions with other members of society. As such, as researchers, we must participate in in the research process with our subjects to ensure we are producing knowledge that is reflective of their reality.”⁵⁶⁸ Thus, the “constructed meanings of actors are the foundation of knowledge”⁵⁶⁹ for the constructivist.

Post-postmodernism has been understood in this research project as a generic term used to refer to the many developments in numerous fields that have occurred as either responses or reactions to postmodernism or have emerged from it. A post-postmodern constructivist can therefore be understood as a constructivist who has emerged from, and has responded to, the criticisms of the postmodernist.

The most significant challenge postmodernism has posed to the constructivist worldview arrived in the form of “the double crises of ethnography.” A crisis which composes of the “crisis of representation”⁵⁷⁰ and the “crisis of legitimation.”⁵⁷¹ The crisis of representation concerns the supposed inability of ethnographers to present the lived experiences of those they have studied in their final written accounts. Thus, the “privileged and special access to ‘reality’”⁵⁷² that ethnographers once claimed to have is shown to be false. The crisis of legitimation, on the other hand, questions how qualitative research is to be evaluated in the contemporary era.

The crisis of representation is the most easily resolved and requires the application of a research approach that I have already embraced—that of

⁵⁶⁷ Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba, “Paradigmatic Controversies, Contradictions, and Emerging Confluence,” 102.

⁵⁶⁸ Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba, “Paradigmatic Controversies, Contradictions, and Emerging Confluence,” 103.

⁵⁶⁹ Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba, “Paradigmatic Controversies, Contradictions, and Emerging Confluence,” 106.

⁵⁷⁰ Brewer, *Ethnography*, 39.

⁵⁷¹ Brewer, *Ethnography*, 46.

⁵⁷² Brewer, *Ethnography*, 38-39.

reflexivity. By employing a reflexive working practice, an ethnographer is able to speak candidly about the limitations of their ethnographic approach, their own biases, and any other factors, which, if hidden, may undermine the validity of their findings. To use Hammersley's phrasing, it is all about making transparent the values that a researcher holds that have driven their research project.⁵⁷³

The crises of legitimation, however, is more problematic as it challenges whether ethnographic research is even "good" research. Post-postmodernists have determined various solutions to this crisis with the most prominent being roughly divisible into two categories. The first consists of researchers seeking to ground the constructivist approach in a weaker version of realism. For example, Hammersley's "subtle realism"⁵⁷⁴ distinguishes between naïve realism and critical realism by positing that whilst an independent "real world" may exist, our perception of this world is imperfect as we do not have direct access to it, thus we must construct it. This approach therefore brings together realist and anti-realist perspectives. In addition to this, David L. Altheide and John M. Johnson's "analytical realism"⁵⁷⁵ approach argues that all knowledge of the "real world" is relative and subject to each individual's perspective and perception, this includes the researcher acknowledging their own individual perception of the world.

The second category consists of researchers seeking to resolve the issue of legitimation through the creation of a best practice criteria for "good" ethnography. Prominent examples of this approach are Lincoln and Guba's "credibility criteria" (which includes advocating prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, referential adequacy, and

⁵⁷³ See: Hammersley, "What's Wrong with Ethnography?"

⁵⁷⁴ See: Hammersley and Atkinson, *Ethnography*. Also, Martyn Hammersley, *Reading Ethnographic Research: A Critical Guide* (London: Routledge, 1997), *What's Wrong with Ethnography?* (London: Routledge, 1992), "What's Wrong with Ethnography?"

⁵⁷⁵ See: David L. Altheide and John M. Johnson, "Reflections on Interpretive Adequacy in Qualitative Research," in *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*, eds. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonne S. Lincoln (London: SAGE, 2011), 581-594; and, David L. Altheide and John M. Johnson, "Criteria for assessing interpretive validity in qualitative research," in *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*, eds., Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (London: SAGE, 1994), 485-499.

member checks),⁵⁷⁶ Clive Seale’s “criteriology,”⁵⁷⁷ and Brewer’s “ethnographic imagination” best practice criteria approach. Whilst this latter approach shares the same name with Atkinson’s “ethnographic imagination,”⁵⁷⁸ it must be stressed that Brewer’s approach focuses on criteria for doing “good” ethnography, whereas Atkinson’s focuses on the art of writing ethnographic accounts.

The best practice criteria-based solutions to the crisis of legitimation seek to answer the question “how are contemporary qualitative studies to be evaluated?” by proposing that the validity and authority of a study’s findings can be validated if a researcher conducts their research according to widely agreed criteria for producing thorough, focused, and comprehensive data. My own research has been influenced by Brewer’s “ethnographic imagination” criteria, which consists of the following three core components:

1. “The belief that fragments of recorded talk, extracts from field notes and reports of observed actions can reliably represent a social world which cannot be completely described in the restricted spatial confines of an ethnographic text, as long as the ethnographer can be reflexive and thereby established his or her integrity and the authority of the data;”⁵⁷⁹

2. “The belief that small-scale, micro-events in everyday life have at least common features with the broader social world, such that general processes permeate down to and are in part reproduced at the level of people’s everyday lives. Thus, microscopic events can illustrate features of broader social processes, as long as the ethnographer sets out the grounds on which these empirical generalizations are made;”⁵⁸⁰

3. “The belief that people make sense of their everyday lives, and offer descriptions and accounts thereof, involving a complex reasoning process, which

⁵⁷⁶ See: Yvonna S. Lincoln and Egon G. Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry* (London: SAGE, 1985); and, Lincoln, Lynham, and, Guba, “Paradigmatic Controversies, Contradictions, and Emerging Confluences.”

⁵⁷⁷ See: Clive Seale, *The Quality of Qualitative Research* (London: SAGE, 1999).

⁵⁷⁸ See: Paul Atkinson, *The Ethnographic Imagination: Textual Constructions of Reality* (London: Routledge, 1991).

⁵⁷⁹ Brewer, *Ethnography*, 53.

⁵⁸⁰ Brewer, *Ethnography*, 53.

must be analysed if that social world is to be understood in the round, although members' accounts should not be taken at face value."⁵⁸¹

These three core components are themselves based upon a further six lengthy and multi-layered recommendations⁵⁸² that Brewer proposes to ensure that ethnographic research is "reliable, rigorous and systematic."⁵⁸³

This idea of creating criteria for "good" ethnographic research has similarly been employed elsewhere in the social sciences. For example, Laurel Richardson has created a five-step criteria to use when reviewing ethnographic papers or monographs. Richardson argues that a work must make a "substantive contribution" to the field of study, that it must contain "aesthetic merit," must use "reflexivity," must have "impact," and that it "expresses a reality."⁵⁸⁴

In addition, Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba formulate a list of how a researcher should judge the "goodness" and quality of their inquiry: "Intersubjective agreement and reasoning among actors, reached through dialogue; shared conversation and construction"; "Trustworthiness and authenticity, including catalyst for action"; "Credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability"; "To interrogate objectivity and subjectivity and their relationship to one another"; and the goodness and quality criteria "[a]re personally relative and need to be understood. Inseparable from the inquiry and the outcome."⁵⁸⁵

Although much of the content of these different criteria for "good" research are subjective, I have endeavoured to follow the advice offered to ensure that my research can be considered a successful ethnographic study and is as thorough, comprehensive, authentic, original, sensitive, and ethical as possible. Additionally, by adhering to such criteria, I have also sought to pre-empt and solve any potential tensions that may occur between my research goals, methodology, and ontology.

⁵⁸¹ Brewer, *Ethnography*, 53.

⁵⁸² See: Brewer, *Ethnography*, 53-54.

⁵⁸³ Brewer, *Ethnography*, 53.

⁵⁸⁴ See: Laurel Richardson, "Evaluating Ethnography," *Qualitative Inquiry* 6/2 (2000): 253-255 (254).

⁵⁸⁵ See: Lincoln, Lynham, and, Guba, "Paradigmatic Controversies, Contradictions, and Emerging Confluences," 108-109.

In line with my ontological position, my epistemological position is that of an interpretivist, with epistemology being understood to mean the “process of thinking. The relationship between what we know and what we see [and] [t]he truths we seek and believe as researchers.”⁵⁸⁶ At its core, an interpretivist epistemology rejects positivism and objectivism in favour of relativism and subjectivism. Ultimately, it seeks to distinguish itself “from approaches that seek value-free causal explanation in terms of variables external to the beliefs of social actors.”⁵⁸⁷ Just as with a constructivist ontological approach, an interpretivist epistemological approach is defined by its “concern for the individual”⁵⁸⁸ and its central endeavour is to “understand the subjective world of human experience.”⁵⁸⁹ This approach is therefore a subjectivist one that understands the role of ethnographic enquiry as being one that seeks to discover “how different people interpret the world in which they live.”⁵⁹⁰

The origins of the interpretivist epistemological model are widely accepted as a “neo-Kantian reaction to positivism in the social sciences”⁵⁹¹ that grew out of the work of the nineteenth-twentieth-century German philosophers Edmund Husserl, Wilhelm Dilthey, and Friedrich Schleiermacher, alongside a number of others. The term “interpretative” is derived from “the German word ‘verstehen,’”⁵⁹² which is generally translated as “understanding.” However, it is not generally agreed what the term “verstehen” actually means and, as a result of this, what the interpretative stance “should be understood to mean.”⁵⁹³ For example, Matthew David stresses that “there is no singular interpretative method, and it is wrong to seek a singular authoritative source”⁵⁹⁴ on the subject. David asserts that

⁵⁸⁶ Lincoln, Lynham, and, Guba, “Paradigmatic Controversies, Contradictions, and Emerging Confluences,” 103.

⁵⁸⁷ Matthew David, “Editor’s Introduction: Methods of Interpretative Sociology,” in *Methods of Interpretive Sociology*, 4 volumes, ed. Matthew David (London: SAGE, 2010), xxiii-xxvi (xxvi).

⁵⁸⁸ Louise Cohen and Lawrence Manion, *Research Methods in Education* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), 17.

⁵⁸⁹ Cohen and Manion, *Research Methods in Education*, 17.

⁵⁹⁰ Cohen and Manion, *Research Methods in Education*, 8.

⁵⁹¹ David, “Editor’s Introduction,” xxvi.

⁵⁹² David, “Editor’s Introduction,” xxiii.

⁵⁹³ David, “Editor’s Introduction,” xxiii.

⁵⁹⁴ David, “Editor’s Introduction,” xxv.

from its inception, the interpretivist standpoint has been riddled with “differences and divisions” on a great number of issues, with David listing the most prominent as being “[w]hether cultural meaning was to be understood in terms of psychological motivations and intentions, or in terms of collective codes and belief systems.”⁵⁹⁵ Such debates led to “disputes over subjective and objective interpretations of the culture, meaning and belief to be researched.”⁵⁹⁶

Instead of searching for a single definition of an interpretivist epistemology we should think of it as a “set of related perspectives on the significance of meaningful action in the production of social life.”⁵⁹⁷ In light of this, the “perspective” that has most significantly informed my own understanding and application of this epistemological stance is that of Geertz’s, which is in line with how interpretivism is most generally used and understood within ethnography. Geertz writes, “[b]elieving, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretative one in search of meaning. It is explication I am after, construing social expression on their surface enigmatical.”⁵⁹⁸

By subscribing to an interpretivist epistemology, I am therefore asserting that the study of culture should take place in just the same way as the study of texts—by interpreting them. Subsequently, by utilising an interpretivist epistemology I am attempting to understand culture in just the same way a literary critic understands a text. Interpretivists approach the study of the social world by emphasising that culture is a product of how human beings interpret the world around them. In addition to this, an ethnographic study itself is also an interpretation; it is the researcher’s interpretation of how those they are studying interpret their world. Central to this epistemology is the need to pay close attention to the role context plays in the act of interpretation and thus the process of meaning making, both in terms of how those being studied make meaning, but also

⁵⁹⁵ David, “Editor’s Introduction,” xxvi.

⁵⁹⁶ David, “Editor’s Introduction,” xxvi.

⁵⁹⁷ David, “Editor’s Introduction,” xxvi.

⁵⁹⁸ Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 5.

how the ethnographer makes meaning. An interpretivist epistemological framework therefore understands “culture as text,” interpreting culture accordingly, and adopts a writing methodology that calls for “thick description.”

Geertz, however, asserts that the processes of “thick description” and reading “culture as text” have additional characteristics, with the most significant being that they reject the notion that an ethnographic study should be considered a microcosmic study of society as a whole,⁵⁹⁹ or, as Geertz puts it, you cannot regard “a remote locality as the world in a teacup.”⁶⁰⁰ For Geertz, one of the most important aspects of an ethnography grounded in interpretivism is the “complex specificity... [and] circumstantiality”⁶⁰¹ of its findings, as he argues:

It is with the kind of material produced by long-term, mainly (though not exclusively) qualitative, highly participative, and almost obsessively fine-comb field study in confined contexts that the mega-concepts with which contemporary social science is afflicted—legitimacy, modernization, integration, conflict, charisma, structure, . . . meaning—can be given the sort of sensible actuality that makes it possible to think not only realistically and concretely *about* them, but, what is more important, creatively and imaginatively *with* them.⁶⁰²

By utilising a Geertzian interpretivist epistemological framework as the foundation of my ethnographic approach, I have again sought to distance myself from grand theorising, in favour of instead accepting each social world as a unique case study that can never again be repeated or returned to. Ultimately, a Geertzian interpretivist understanding of ethnography can be summarised as comprising of three things: “it is interpretive; what it is interpretive of is the flow of social discourse; and the interpreting involved consists in trying to rescue the ‘said’ of such discourse from its perishing occasions and fix it in perusable terms.”⁶⁰³

⁵⁹⁹ See: Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures*, 20-23.

⁶⁰⁰ Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures*, 23.

⁶⁰¹ Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures*, 23.

⁶⁰² Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures*, 23.

⁶⁰³ Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures*, 20.

However, such an approach is not without its complications. For example, Michael Martin uses Geertz's account of Balinese cockfighting to highlight the problematic potential of interpretivism. Four of the most significant problems Martin highlights are as follows:

1. If a researcher is not overtly clear about their overall interpretative hypothesis of the culture they are studying, then the account they produce can be left open to interpretation, thus resulting in the production of alternative or conflicting interpretative hypotheses of the same account.⁶⁰⁴ As an example of this, Martin asserts that Geertz himself is not clear about his own interpretative hypotheses of Balinese cockfighting. Martin evidences this by citing three alternative hypotheses that have been offered instead, namely: the therapeutic interpretation by Paul Rabinow and William M. Sullivan,⁶⁰⁵ the symbolic struggle interpretation by Daniel Little,⁶⁰⁶ and the status organisation and commentary interpretation by William Roseberry,⁶⁰⁷
2. Interpretivist accounts can often purposefully suppress/repress the role causation plays in the social world they are studying. This therefore limits the ability of the social sciences to adequately inquire about the social world they are interested in, as it prevents a researcher from asking certain questions. For example, Martin asserts that "questions about origins, functions, and psychological effects go well beyond the scope of interpretative social science."⁶⁰⁸ Thus the holistic nature of such accounts can be called into question;⁶⁰⁹

⁶⁰⁴ See: Michael Martin, "Geertz and the Interpretative Approach in Anthropology," *Synthese* 97 (1993): 269-286 (273-275).

⁶⁰⁵ See: Paul Rabinow and William M. Sullivan, "The Interpretative Turn," in *Interpretative Social Science: A Second Look*, eds. Paul Rabinow and William M. Sullivan (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1987), 1-30.

⁶⁰⁶ See: Daniel Little, *Varieties of Social Explanations* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991).

⁶⁰⁷ See: William Roseberry, "Balinese Cockfights and the Seduction of "Anthropology,"" *Social Research* 49 (1988): 261-270.

⁶⁰⁸ Martin, "Geertz and the Interpretative Approach in Anthropology," 277.

⁶⁰⁹ See: Martin, "Geertz and the Interpretative Approach in Anthropology," 275-278.

3. An interpretivist account of a culture may lack the evidence necessary to validate the interpretative hypothesis being given. This can lead to the production of alternative and conflicting hypotheses and the inability to distinguish between valid and invalid ones;⁶¹⁰
4. And finally, it is questionable whether or not criteria can be determined to distinguish whether an account is valid or not. For example, whilst Martin notes that Geertz describes a “good” interpretation as being one that “takes us into the heart of that of which it is the interpretation,”⁶¹¹ he asserts that this still does not make explicit what a “good” interpretation is. Similarly, he also notes that Geertz argues that it is preferable for studies in this field to be “incisive,”⁶¹² yet Martin again asserts that Geertz is elusive about how this can be translated into criteria.

Whilst I am committed to an interpretivist understanding of knowledge, my application of this epistemology has endeavoured to take the above points into consideration. I have therefore ensured that there is “wriggle-room” in my epistemological framework so that I can, if necessary, move beyond interpretation and utilise other questions of inquiry, ensuring that the ethnographic account I generate is not constrained or limited by my epistemology. Similarly, I have also sought to ensure that each interpretation I offer is validated by tangible evidence, avoiding the accusation of producing an unverifiable account. In addition, the criteria I have already cited in relation to my ontological position was also used to ensure the validity and verifiability of my findings. I have therefore accepted that “[w]hile Geertz’s interpretive blends and aims are not always acceptable to all anthropologists, his means are certainly taken for granted (to figure out [meaning] from what the native says and does).”⁶¹³

⁶¹⁰ See: Martin, “Geertz and the Interpretative Approach in Anthropology,” 281-284.

⁶¹¹ Martin, “Geertz and the Interpretative Approach in Anthropology,” 279 (Martin quoting Geertz).

⁶¹² Martin, “Geertz and the Interpretative Approach in Anthropology,” 280 (Martin quoting Geertz).

⁶¹³ Van Maanen, *Tales From the Field*, 17.

Finally, my understanding of both constructivism and interpretivism has also been influenced by the work of Zygmunt Bauman in the field of social scientific hermeneutics, particularly his work on how the role of the researcher has shifted from being a legislator to an interpreter.⁶¹⁴ Bauman asserts that not only is the social world of those being studied constructed, but that the account of that world being given by the ethnographer is also constructed and that by conducting ethnographic research, the researcher is also taking part in the construction of the social world under examination. However, Bauman stresses that this role of constructing and interpreting the social world was once a controlling and legislating one, whereby other cultures were seen as "wrong" and in need of correcting. Bauman's analysis therefore focuses on the shift from the study of the social world that was colonial in nature to one that accepts cultural relativism.⁶¹⁵

Researchers applying constructivist and interpretivist models tend to rely upon qualitative data collection methods or a combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods to elicit the "participants' views of the situation being studied."⁶¹⁶ For example, Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba note that a constructivist/interpretivist requires training in qualitative and quantitative research methods, as well as historical research⁶¹⁷ and that "[t]ypically, qualitative methods are used"⁶¹⁸ to conduct such research. Similarly, "[i]nterpretive approaches rely heavily on naturalistic methods (interviewing and observation and analysis of existing texts)"⁶¹⁹ to generate data. Walsh also asserts that a constructivist ontology has "now become the primary theoretical foundation of contemporary ethnography."⁶²⁰

⁶¹⁴ See: Zygmunt Bauman, "Legislators and Interpreters: Culture as the Ideology of Intellectuals," in *Intimations of Postmodernity*, Zygmunt Bauman (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987), 1-25.

⁶¹⁵ See: Bauman, "Legislators and Interpreters," 7-9 and 23.

⁶¹⁶ John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (London: SAGE, 2003), 9.

⁶¹⁷ Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba, "Paradigmatic Controversies, Contradictions, and Emerging Confluences," 101.

⁶¹⁸ Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba, "Paradigmatic Controversies, Contradictions, and Emerging Confluences," 105.

⁶¹⁹ Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba, "Paradigmatic Controversies, Contradictions, and Emerging Confluences," 105.

⁶²⁰ Walsh, "Doing Ethnography," 227.

Similarly, Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba propose that the "inquirer posture"⁶²¹ that a constructivist/interpretivist adopts is that of the "passionate participant"⁶²² whereby the researcher joins a community and seeks to research it from the inside by utilising "hermeneutical/ dialectical"⁶²³ methodologies, qualitative methodologies that lend themselves to investigate the opinions, truths, and realities of others. Thus, the researcher becomes a "facilitator of multivoice reconstruction."⁶²⁴ My research process can subsequently be summarised as an inductive one whereby I did not begin with theory, but rather I "generate[d] or inductively develop[ed] a theory or pattern of meanings"⁶²⁵ as the research progressed. The research process therefore started with the individuals that I wished to study and the theory I developed emerged from the situations I was observing and was grounded in the data generated, keeping in line with the constructivist/interpretivist understanding that "[t]heory should not precede research but follow it."⁶²⁶

By employing a constructivist ontology and an interpretivist epistemology my research contends that whilst there may be a "real world" independent from the human mind, we cannot have direct access to this world and may not even know for sure that it exists. Thus, to attempt to have knowledge of that world is impossible. All we can have knowledge of is how our own selves and other human beings interpret and construct the social world, both individually and collectively. The foundation of the social world is thus each individual's own experiences and ideas. A researcher can therefore only generate knowledge of society by studying how individuals construct, interpret, and understand their social world and the meanings that they derive from it. A relativist theory embraces the existence of multiple realities, whereby different groups and communities share in them to

⁶²¹ Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba, "Paradigmatic Controversies, Contradictions, and Emerging Confluences," 101.

⁶²² Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba, "Paradigmatic Controversies, Contradictions, and Emerging Confluences," 101.

⁶²³ Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba, "Paradigmatic Controversies, Contradictions, and Emerging Confluences," 98.

⁶²⁴ Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba, "Paradigmatic Controversies, Contradictions, and Emerging Confluences," 99.

⁶²⁵ Creswell, *Research Design*, 9.

⁶²⁶ Cohen and Manion, *Research Methods in Education*, 18.

differing extents. My underlying research philosophy therefore lends itself to data collection methodologies that seek to take place within the natural surroundings of individuals, explore the phenomena within this setting, and privilege the words, meanings, interpretations, and understandings of individuals, hence why I have used ethnography as my core methodology.

My ontology, epistemology, and adoption of reflexivity and ethnography are therefore all complementary approaches that have the same underlying principles and objectives. For example, in their tabulation of inquiry paradigms, Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba ask: “[w]hose voices are heard in the research produced through the inquiry process? Whose views are presenting and/or producing the data?”⁶²⁷ When considering how constructivist and interpretivist paradigms answer this question, Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba assert that a researcher working with this framework “must”⁶²⁸ use reflection and that reflexivity is a “serious”⁶²⁹ part of this approach.

Why Contextual Bible Study should be *Formally* Grounded in Ethnography in both Practice and Writing

Just as my definition of ethnography can be considered a “common sense” one, my reasons for asserting that CBS should be formally grounded in ethnography are similarly based upon common sense. First, however, I will explain why I am using the qualifier “formally.” I chose to add “formally” to my statement about CBS being grounded in ethnography to recognise that whilst what I am calling for may already be being done, it is not, however, being done formally. For example, when reading extant CBS literature, it is evident that CBS practitioners are devoting time and

⁶²⁷ Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba, “Paradigmatic Controversies, Contradictions, and Emerging Confluences,” 115.

⁶²⁸ Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba, “Paradigmatic Controversies, Contradictions, and Emerging Confluences,” 115.

⁶²⁹ Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba, “Paradigmatic Controversies, Contradictions, and Emerging Confluences,” 115.

energy to understanding the contexts of those they are “reading with” and that the resultant data is being used to inform the CBS programmes being developed, however, I have yet to find any formal acknowledgement that such a practice is taking place or that this process must be included in the beginning stages of a CBS programme.

I do not doubt that those using CBS are including this step—much of the published literature on CBS contains data that indicates ethnography is being used as a central part of CBS—but I believe this step is being conducted in an inconsistent and informal, *ad hoc* manner. Additionally, this essential stage and its findings are often absent from published CBS literature. In this section, I will unpack why ethnography should be named as the formally agreed, non-negotiable prerequisite opening stage of CBS, as well as why the resultant findings of this process should be included in the final writing-up stage.

My reasons for this assertion are twofold: the first relates to the knowledge of the researcher/CBS facilitator and the second relates to the knowledge of the final audience of the research. In order to better examine each reason, I will consider them in light of my own research project.

Firstly, my own knowledge as a researcher/CBS facilitator would have been noticeably wanting if I had neglected to spend a year immersing myself in the culture of those I was about to “read with.” It was only by witnessing first-hand how these men came to so wholly embody coal mining, how they lived and breathed it, how both their bodies and minds were shaped by it, and how being employed in such a perilous industry at such a perilous time impacted every facet of their lives that I had the necessary contextual knowledge to design a CBS programme that actually resonated with their experiences and worldview and addressed their most pressing contextual concerns.

If I had instead relied upon gaining such knowledge from extant studies on coal mining in Britain rather than using such studies to supplement my own ethnographic findings, I would not have been aware of the present-day state of the industry or the most recent and pressing issues being faced by coal miners—issues that came to dominant this project. Thus, if I had not conducted my own ethnographic study, the knowledge I would have acquired would have been both

out of date and irrelevant,⁶³⁰ particularly because throughout the duration of my research, all four of the last few remaining deep-coal collieries in Britain ceased operations and closed.

The closure of these collieries, as well as many other unexpected events, such as the death of Margaret Thatcher in April 2013, dramatically changed the lives and realities of the men I was studying. By living alongside these men, I was able to witness first-hand how such events pushed a culture already teetering on the brink of extinction over the edge. If I had not witnessed these tragic events then the CBS programme I later designed and facilitated would not have been sensitive to, nor sought to allow the men a safe space in which to address, the dramatic changes that were taking place in their lives.

Similarly, I would have been ill-prepared to adapt my research in response to the events that were unfolding around it. For example, being a participant-observer⁶³¹ of the wave of mass involuntary redundancy that hit Britain’s coal miners meant that I was much better placed to understand the trauma⁶³² it caused these men, as well as how the overall demise of coal mining in Britain—and thus the destruction of the only way these men could legitimise their contextual behaviours, worldview, and identity—also triggered trauma. If I had neglected to conduct such a detailed ethnographic study, as well as to utilise that study as the basis of my CBS programme, I would not have later so readily understood why these traumas dominated the CBS sessions.

The first reason CBS should be formally grounded in ethnography, then, is because without it, a researcher/CBS facilitator does not have enough contextual knowledge to design, conduct, and analyse a contextually nuanced, relevant, and sensitive CBS programme.

Secondly, CBS should be formally grounded in ethnography so that the eventual readers of published CBS literature have the requisite knowledge to

⁶³⁰ A claim I will examine in depth in the following chapter.

⁶³¹ “Participant” because my own father was also made redundant (thus my home life became severely disrupted and my entire family suffered as a result of the collieries closing) and “observer” because I witnessed how other men were also made redundant.

⁶³² The trauma of these events will be explored in detail in the next chapter. Similarly, the impact trauma had upon the contextual readings produced by the coal miners will also be explored in chapter six.

correctly understand the connection between text and context, as it is all too easy for the many contextual nuances, resonances, and origins of contextual readings to get “lost in translation.” For example, let us assume that the final audience of this thesis knows very little about its contextual focus. How then, can the contextual readings that form the climax of this thesis, which were produced by South Derbyshire coal miners, have any real impact? The contextual knowledge required to fully comprehend the contextual nuances, resonances, origins, and significance of the readings will be so minimal that only a very basic impact can be expected. It is therefore essential that not only does the CBS methodology begin with the thorough immersion of the researcher in the context of those producing the contextual readings, but that at the end of the process, the writing-up stage, the final audience of the readings are also able to experience the same thorough immersion. A written ethnography must therefore be woven into or presented alongside the contextual biblical readings.

Whilst it may seem obvious that it is good practice to include a written ethnography alongside a contextual reading, at the time of writing, it is, in fact, rare for such data to be included. Similarly, whilst it is evident that the authors of most studies have conducted a great deal of ethnographic fieldwork as part of their research, it is also the case that many studies openly omit such research and instead rely solely upon extant ethnographic accounts. My primary motivation for advocating formally grounding CBS in ethnography, both in practice and writing, has thus developed in response to the difficulty and frustration I have experienced when trying to understand how a contextual reading is informed by the context of those producing the reading, why the reading has developed in the manner it has, and what contextual factors have played the most significant role in the development of the reading.

At the time of writing, Louise J. Lawrence is the only scholar to identify ethnography as being central to her application of CBS. Lawrence writes that she conducted an ethnographic study⁶³³ of each of the groups she “read with” and that

⁶³³ Lawrence’s volume relies heavily upon ethnography for the grounding of the contextual readings she presents. For example, if we consider Lawrence’s account of reading in a rural village, we see that Lawrence skilfully synthesises existing accounts and analyses of rural living (both poetic

her goal was to develop a Geertzian thick description of each group.⁶³⁴ In her description of ethnography and the reasons behind her choice of methodology, Lawrence explains that she was influenced by the work of Leonora Tubbs Tisdale on community/congregational exegesis⁶³⁵ and cites Tubbs Tisdale’s identification of “seven symbols for community exegesis that unlock the conceptual and material world of the subjects among whom one lives and works”⁶³⁶ as being helpful in constructing her own ethnographic method.⁶³⁷ Thus, even Lawrence, who does acknowledge the role ethnography does/should play in relation to CBS barely engages with the methodological and ideological intricacies and implications of ethnography.

Lawrence’s openness, however, about the centrality of ethnography to CBS is a rarity. As CBS originates from South Africa, much of the literature that exists on CBS is South African. As a result of this, I have primarily engaged with South African CBS literature and my argument regarding ethnography and CBS has been primarily motivated by literature that originates from this context.⁶³⁸ When reading this material, I have found it difficult to fully engage with and comprehend the readings being presented, primarily because such literature rarely examines how the contextual readings being presented are connected to the contexts of those producing them, nor do they elaborate on what cultural or contextual circumstances have led to the development of such readings. For example, it is often the case that the “ordinary” readers a particular project may focus upon are

and academic) with her own observations and analyses of the village of Drewsteignton (the village which she approached to “read with”), as well as with the stories and experiences shared by the inhabitants that chose to contribute to her project. The subsequent contextual readings (of a variety of Lucan narratives) produced by the participants are then presented in light of, and alongside, this ethnographic data. The participants’ readings are therefore grounded in the lived and embodied realities of the individuals that produced them. See: Louise J. Lawrence, *The Word in Place: Reading the New Testament in Contemporary Contexts* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2009), 60-73.

⁶³⁴ Lawrence, *The Word in Place*, 38.

⁶³⁵ Leonora Tubbs Tisdale, *Preaching as Local Theology and Folk Art* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997).

⁶³⁶ Lawrence, *The Word in Place*, 38.

⁶³⁷ Tubbs Tisdale’s “seven symbols” are summarised as being, “stories and interviews,” “archival materials,” “demographics,” “architecture and visual arts,” “rituals,” “events and activities,” and “people.” Lawrence, *The Word in Place*, 38-39. Quite without knowing, I have also drawn upon each of these “symbols” when attempting to create my own thick description of male coal-mining culture in South Derbyshire.

⁶³⁸ A detailed account of CBS’s origins will be given in chapter five.

merely described as “South African,” “black,” “illiterate,” “poor,” or “marginalised.”⁶³⁹ This makes it difficult for readers from different contexts to engage with it.

When a written ethnography is omitted, rather than encouraging and enhancing cultural awareness and allowing for a dialogue to develop between different readers of the Bible, contextual readings instead promote cultural isolation and exclusivity, as without a written ethnography it is almost impossible for audiences to bridge the cultural gap between themselves and those that have produced the reading. The inclusion of a written ethnography would provide a means of bridging this gap.

However, just as I have already stressed at the beginning of this section, it is clear that it has already been recognised that ethnography is essential to CBS, yet such an acknowledgement has not yet been formally proposed. Nevertheless, the degree to which this is already being done varies considerably, as well as there being great discrepancy regarding what the actual focus of conducting an ethnographic study should be. This can be seen most clearly when we consider edited volumes on contextual biblical interpretation in which CBS features as one method among many. For example, in *Voices from the Margin*⁶⁴⁰ there is tremendous variation with regard to the amount and type of ethnographic detail included, with the vast majority containing only very brief summaries of the overall historical or contemporary circumstances of the context that is being used as the “lens” through which a contextual reading is being produced. “Part Three. Many Readings: Exodus” is demonstrative of this, as the chapters contained within this section vary significantly in the way in which ethnographic information is both approached and presented. For example, in “An Asian Feminist Perspective: The Exodus Story (Exodus 1.8-22; 2.1-10),”⁶⁴¹ which consists of a skit exploring some of the lesser known characters of Exodus by a group of Indian women, the women

⁶³⁹ For example, see: West, *The Academy of the Poor*, 9-11.

⁶⁴⁰ R. S. Sugirtharajah, ed., *Voices from the Margin: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2006).

⁶⁴¹ An Asian Group Work, “An Asian Feminist Perspective: The Exodus Story (Exodus 1.8-22; 2.1-10),” in *Voices from the Margin: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World*, ed. R. S. Sugirtharajah (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2006), 217-226.

that produced the story are listed and identified as “Indian” with no further ethnographical data being included. Thus, it is extremely difficult to identify what precise contextual circumstances have led to this unique re-reading of Exodus and what the significance of this reading is. Similarly, if we consider “Part Four. Postcolonial Readings,” we see that the depth to which each postcolonial context is explored also differs significantly. Chapters by Archie C. C. Lee⁶⁴² and Dube⁶⁴³ are particularly demonstrative of this, with Dube’s⁶⁴⁴ containing more detailed and complex information in comparison to Lee’s.⁶⁴⁵ Similarly, if we consider the contributions made to *Reading Other-Wise*, we see that one chapter deals with contextual readings produced by Caucasian, Latina, and Black South African women, yet only a few sentences are devoted to describing the contextual realities of each group, thus making it impossible to draw any useful connections between text and context.⁶⁴⁶

Similarly, if we consider many of the journal articles⁶⁴⁷ produced by West, we again see that there is a great deal of discrepancy with regard to the ethnographic detail included, particularly in relation to the lived and embodied

⁶⁴² Archie C. C. Lee, “Returning to China: Biblical Interpretation in Postcolonial Hong Kong,” in *Voices from the Margin: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World*, ed. R. S. Sugirtharajah (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2006), 281-296.

⁶⁴³ Musa W. Dube, “Reading for Decolonization (John 4.1-42),” in *Voices from the Margin: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World*, ed. R. S. Sugirtharajah (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2006), 297-318.

⁶⁴⁴ Dube’s work, however, varies considerably with regard to the ethnographic detail that she includes, thus highlighting how even in the work produced by the same author, the amount and type of ethnographic detail varies.

⁶⁴⁵ The difference in chapter length also attests to my assertion, with Dube’s chapter being 21 pages long and Lee’s being only 15 pages long.

⁶⁴⁶ Nicole M. Simopoulos, “Who Was Hagar? Mistress, Divorcee, Exile, or Exploited Worker: An Analysis of Contemporary Grassroots Readings of Genesis 16 by Caucasian, Latina, and Black South African Women,” in *Reading Other-Wise: Socially-Engaged Biblical Scholars Reading with Their Local Communities*, ed. Gerald O. West (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), 63-72.

⁶⁴⁷ The five articles that I am paying particular attention to here are: 1. Gerald O. West, “Do Two Walk Together? Walking with the Other through Contextual Bible Study,” *Anglican Theological Review* 93/3 (2011): 431-449; 2. Gerald O. West and Sithembiso Zwane, ““Why are you sitting there?” Reading Matthew 20:1-16 in the Context of Casual Workers in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa,” in *Matthew: Texts @ Contexts Series*, eds. Nicole Wilkinson Duran and James Grimshaw (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013), 175-188; 3. Gerald O. West and Bongi Zengele, “The Medicine of God’s Word: What People Living with HIV and Aids Want (and Get) from the Bible,” *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 125 (2006): 51-63; 4. Gerald O. West, et al., “Rape in the House of David: The Biblical Story of Tamar as a Resource for Transformation,” *Agenda* 61 (2004): 36-41; and, 5. Gerald O. West and Phumzile Zondi-Mabizela, “The Bible Story that Became a Campaign: The Tamar Campaign in South Africa (And Beyond),” *Ministerial Formation* 103 (2004): 4-12.

realities of the “ordinary” readers with whom he works. Many of the articles focus upon a brief, generalised introduction to the postcolonial, Apartheid, and post-Apartheid context of South Africa and the work that various charities and organisations working within this context do. For example, in “Do Two Walk Together?”, West devotes the first few pages to an introduction to the history of CBS and then states the following about the South African context:

Within the more general realities of the struggle against colonialism and apartheid, the specific contextual features which gave a particular impetus to contextual Bible reading were the 1985 State of Emergency and the state-sponsored violence in KwaZulu-Natal. In [sic] was within this social cauldron that socially engaged biblical scholars and ordinary Christians began to re-read the Bible together, yearning to hear a prophetic word from God.⁶⁴⁸

This is followed with an invite “to imagine you are participating in a Contextual Bible Study facilitated by staff from the Ujamaa Centre,”⁶⁴⁹ which West follows with an example of a typical Ujamaa Centre CBS session. Whilst I appreciate that West may be trying to creatively involve the reader in the work of the Ujamaa Centre and the context of South Africa without weighing them down with South Africa’s complex and tragic history, as someone who is distinctly ‘other’ to both West and the “ordinary” readers presented in his work, I find it difficult to “imagine” that I am participating in their sessions as I have little to no understanding of the grassroots reality of such a context.

Similarly, in “The Medicine of God’s Word,” West devotes a considerable amount of time to describing the work of “Siyaphila”⁶⁵⁰ when it would be more beneficial if he devoted time to explaining what it is like living with HIV and AIDS in South Africa from the perspective of those actually living with the disease.⁶⁵¹

⁶⁴⁸ West, “Do Two Walk Together?” 433.

⁶⁴⁹ West, “Do Two Walk Together?” 434.

⁶⁵⁰ Siyaphila is an organisation that helps those living with HIV and AIDS in South Africa.

⁶⁵¹ Of course, I understand that West may have had a responsibility to the organisation to include them in the article and to raise awareness of their endeavours, particularly if the research has been conducted collaboratively. Avaron Ipsen has similarly shown the same dedication and allegiance to the social justice organisation SWOP-USA (the Sex Workers Outreach Project) through detailing her involvement with them as a campaigner for the rights of sex workers in her volume *Sex*

However, in "Why are you sitting there?," West does go to great lengths to explain the complex unemployment situation of South Africa in order to ground the contextual reading of Matthew 20:1-16 produced by unemployed individuals in South Africa.⁶⁵² Again, whilst the information that West provides is useful in grounding the readings being presented, it would have been more beneficial had he focused upon describing the grassroots reality of unemployment and poverty in South Africa.

In addition, there are also moments when extremely thought-provoking contextual realities are simply "dropped in," which, as an outsider, I am then desperate to know more about. For example, to reflect upon the legacy and impact of the Tamar Campaign,⁶⁵³ West and his colleagues interview various different groups that contributed to the project. When analysing these interviews, West et al. note the following:

The principal researcher, who is also the minister in this community, made it clear that he thought there was genuine confusion here, much of it due, he suggested, to generations of ministers refusing to challenge the views of senior, powerful males in the community.⁶⁵⁴

As I am also working with men who hold powerful positions in their community (albeit in the community of the workplace), I was fascinated by this observation. However, this is all that is said on the subject and no further information or explanation is provided. It would have been greatly beneficial if I was able to see how this reality manifested itself not only in the readings that were produced, but also ethnographically in everyday life.

Working and the Bible. See: Avaren Ipsen, *Sex Working and the Bible* (London: Equinox, 2009), 33-34. For more on SWOP, see: SWOP USA, "About Us," 2012, <http://www.swopusa.org/about-us/>.

⁶⁵² West and Zwane, "Why are you sitting there?" 175-182.

⁶⁵³ The Tamar Campaign was launched by West and the Ujamaa Centre in South Africa in 2000. The purpose of the campaign was to challenge the churches of South Africa to better support victims of sexual gender-based violence and to more effectively speak out against perpetrators of such violence. The campaign used contextual readings of the rape of Tamar narrative, produced by victims of sexual gender-based violence, as the backbone for this challenge. The campaign has since been continued by FECCLAHA (the Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa), who are based in Nairobi, Kenya.

⁶⁵⁴ West, et al., "Rape in the House of David," 41.

As the above discussion demonstrates, there are two discrepancies at play here: 1. With regard to the actual inclusion of ethnographic details alongside the contextual reading being presented (both between different authors and in the various works of a single author); 2. With regard to what type of ethnographic data is being included, namely, general descriptions of the long and complex socio-political and economic history of a context (such as the inclusion of an analysis of the impact of issues such colonialism, Apartheid, and orientalism), or smaller case-study style descriptions of the actual lived and embodied realities of those living at a grassroots level.

If we are to formalise the inclusion of ethnography in the CBS methodology, it is thus necessary to judge the most appropriate way to incorporate ethnographic data into the final account of a contextual reading. In my opinion, preference should be given to data that elucidates the grassroots, day-to-day lives of “ordinary” readers and general descriptions of the overall historical and contemporary circumstances of their context should be sparingly used to ground this more specific data.

However, if I am correct in asserting that whilst the vast majority of CBS scholars already incorporate ethnography into their CBS projects, there must be a reason why, thus far, this has not been identified as ethnography, as well as why a detailed examination of the ethnographic methods and processes used and the subsequent ethnographic data are being excluded. The following are possible reasons for such omissions:

1. Almost all researchers working in the field of contextual biblical interpretation begin “reading with” or through the lens of contexts that they themselves either originate from or have strong connections to (for example, West, Dube, Makhosazana K. Nzimande, Sugirtharajah, Sarojini Nadar, Justin S. Ukpog, and Tat-Siong Benny Liew are but a few examples of this) and thus, as ‘insiders’, may not recognise the necessity for conducting a formal study of a context they already innately know;

2. That there exists an assumption that the audiences (both scholarly and non-scholarly) that will read the end product will already have knowledge of the context/culture at hand;⁶⁵⁵
3. That the researcher may not have the time or resources to devote to conducting and writing a thorough ethnographic study;⁶⁵⁶
4. That the publication has a limited word count and thus an examination of all methods utilised, as well as a written ethnography, cannot be included;
5. That there is a general lack of understanding that readers need this information;⁶⁵⁷
6. That large-scale socio-political and economic issues (such as colonialism and Apartheid) are assumed to have the most significant relevance in relation to the readings that are being presented, rather than how such issues filter down and manifest at a grassroots level.⁶⁵⁸

⁶⁵⁵ Such an assumption is a relatively easy one to make, particularly when we consider that the vast majority of findings of such projects are generally published in journals or by publishing houses that are aimed at the contexts or countries from which the contextual readings originate. This can be seen most clearly when we consider the contextual readings coming out of Africa, particularly South Africa. For example, many are published by South African journals (such as the "Journal of Theology for Southern Africa" and "Agenda: Empowering Women for Gender Equality," published by the University of South Africa Press) and publishing houses (such as "Cluster Publications" based in Pietermaritzburg). Similarly, it can also be assumed that as a researcher is choosing to read contextual readings produced by African communities, said researcher will most likely have some existing knowledge about its countries and their historical and contemporary circumstances. However, just because one has knowledge about the colonial history of Africa as a whole, does not mean that one understands how such a reality (along with many other socio-political and economic realities) manifests itself in the many, many different contexts that exist within the continent of Africa. In addition, if we consider the bibliographies of the vast majority of journals and volumes coming from Africa, they invariably only cite other African scholars. This is understandable - a researcher will cite experts in the field in which they are working - however, it may lead to such works becoming insular and exclusive, undermining the great strides that African biblical scholarship has made in the global study of the Bible.

⁶⁵⁶ This is particularly reflective of the multitude of constraints that are regularly placed upon researchers and their research, with three obvious examples being funding, time restraints, and word limits.

⁶⁵⁷ For example, if the author is publishing their article in a journal that is generally aimed at individuals from similar contexts to that of the author, or to those that have produced the contextual reading, then international readers who are not already in possession of the necessary ethnographic knowledge may not be a pressing concern as they will most likely be a minority reader. However, whilst such journals may have a specific audience in mind, it is also the case that many Western academic institutions do not subscribe to such journals, my own university included. Therefore, it could be argued that both parties are equally detached from one another.

⁶⁵⁸ This could be reflective of the political and ideological bias of the researcher.

Thus far, the examples I have drawn upon to make my case for grounding CBS in ethnography comprise of researchers that use CBS within their “home” contexts.⁶⁵⁹ However, if we consider how CBS has thus far been used outside of South Africa, it is evident that not all researchers “read with” members of their “home” context. This makes the need for ethnography even more significant. Susannah Cornwall and David J. Nixon similarly highlight their awareness of this issue. For example, they note:

Justin Ukpong suggests that those who ‘read with’ participants in CBS should be familiar with their cultural perspectives, and should somehow situate themselves within the community, though they need not be indigenous to do it (Ukpong 2002: 22). In this case, the lead researcher has been associated with the soup kitchen over a period of eight years. The co-researcher had carried out a research project on theology and the homeless community in the research city and another nearby city several years previously.⁶⁶⁰

Cornwall and Nixon acknowledge the need for a researcher to conduct an ethnographic study of any communities where the researcher cannot claim to be “indigenous.” Whilst it is clear that as part of their study of homeless and vulnerably housed individuals Cornwall and Nixon did first conduct an ethnographic study, this information was not then included in the publications stemming from this project.⁶⁶¹ Two other examples of CBS that are also problematic in this respect are the works of Alison Peden⁶⁶² and Bob Ekblad.⁶⁶³

In Peden’s account of her CBS work with female prisoners, the only ethnographic detail we are given is that the participants were female prisoners in

⁶⁵⁹ For example, West and the Ujamaa Centre’s manual states, “We have done many hundreds of Bible studies in many hundreds of different contexts, all over the world, but mostly among black South Africans from poor, working-class, and marginalised communities. Most of the staff of the Ujamaa Centre come from such communities.” See: West and the Ujamaa Centre, *Doing Contextual Bible Study*, 3.

⁶⁶⁰ Susannah Cornwall and David J. Nixon, “Readings from the Road: Contextual Bible Study with a Group of Homeless and Vulnerably-Housed People,” *Expository Times* 123/1 (2011): 12-19 (13).

⁶⁶¹ See: Cornwall and Nixon, “Readings from the Road.”

⁶⁶² Alison Peden, “Contextual Bible Study at Cornton Vale Women’s Prison, Stirling,” *The Expository Times* 117/1 (2005): 15-18.

⁶⁶³ Bob Ekblad, *Reading the Bible with the Damned* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005).

Corton Vale Women’s Prison in Stirling, Scotland, that the majority of attendees were also those that regularly attended the prison chapel, and that the educational background of the group varied dramatically.⁶⁶⁴ In other words, hardly any detail at all.

Ekblad’s *Reading the Bible with the Damned*, on the other hand, does contain a great deal of ethnographic detail, but it varies tremendously in depth and is at times difficult to follow. For example, Ekblad includes a detailed autobiographical introduction to his volume, which explains why he has been drawn to “read with” the groups of individuals that form the core of his volume (namely, a Cuban Jew, Guatemalan university students, Honduran campesinos, Chicano gang members, drug dealers, incarcerated heroine, crack, and meth addicts, and undocumented farmworkers).⁶⁶⁵ In addition to this, he also includes a large variety of accounts of the lives of such people and explains with great sensitivity the difficulties and challenges that they face in every-day life. However, I found the manner in which Ekblad interweaves the stories and readings difficult to follow, as not only did the anecdotes offered come across as momentary snapshots of the lives of those featured within the volume, but as many of the contexts seemed so similar (especially to me as an outsider), I found it difficult to separate one account from the next, making it difficult to engage with the volume.

For example, Ekblad introduces us to “Julio,” a Chicano gang member, by recounting a story about a Bible study session with Julio and his family that gets out of hand because of Julio’s inability to cope with being in the family home and having children present causing distractions.⁶⁶⁶ However, we do not learn anything more about Julio until twelve pages later when Ekblad recounts a story about Julio’s anger upon learning that he has to pay back child support payments that were claimed by his partner whilst he was in prison.⁶⁶⁷ The sporadic way that Ekblad references his obviously rich ethnographic data thus prevents the reader from understanding the contexts presented as fully as they would like.

⁶⁶⁴ See: Peden, “Contextual Bible Study at Corton Vale Women’s Prison, Stirling,” 15-18.

⁶⁶⁵ Ekblad, *Reading the Bible with the Damned*, xiii-xviii.

⁶⁶⁶ See: Ekblad, *Reading the Bible with the Damned*, 15-17.

⁶⁶⁷ See: Ekblad, *Reading the Bible with the Damned*, 29-30.

Similarly, Ekblad does not provide statistical data to evidence some of his claims. For example, he states that “[j]ail inmates are often in the process of losing their wives and children, who are estranged from them because of affairs and other drug – and alcohol – induced chaos preceding their arrest. Others face years in prison resulting from their decision to sell drugs or because of other crimes.”⁶⁶⁸ Whilst I do not dispute Ekblad’s claims, it would be beneficial for the end reader if he had included statistics to confirm such assertions.

Finally, some works also totally omit ethnographic fieldwork as part of the research process. For example, Sharon Jacob’s *Reading Mary Alongside Indian Surrogate Mothers*⁶⁶⁹ relies solely upon extant research on Indian surrogate mothers to construct a contextual reading, rather than her own ethnographic findings. After reading numerous accounts of the context of Indian surrogate mothers, including fictional and non-fictional and historic and contemporary accounts, Jacob interprets a series of biblical texts in light of her reading about their context.⁶⁷⁰

In addition to asserting that each stage of CBS should be grounded in ethnography, I also wish to stress that the ethnographic process can be greatly enhanced by the inclusion of reflexivity (as emphasised in chapter two). This is something that my South African colleagues are particularly adept at doing. For example, both West and Dube regularly reflect upon their positionality in relation to those that they “read with.” For example, West repeatedly returns to reflect upon his positionality as a white, middle-class South African man who was educated in Europe and the “groomed for greatness” reality of such men in the South African context.⁶⁷¹ Dube similarly regularly reflects upon her positionality as a Motswana⁶⁷² woman in South Africa.⁶⁷³ To a lesser extent, this has also been done by those

⁶⁶⁸ Ekblad, *Reading the Bible with the Damned*, 46.

⁶⁶⁹ Sharon Jacob, *Reading Mary Alongside Indian Surrogate Mothers: Violent Love, Oppressive Liberation, and Infancy Narratives* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

⁶⁷⁰ For my full review of Jacob, see: Tiffany Webster, “A Review of Sharon Jacob’s *Reading Mary Alongside Indian Surrogate Mothers: Violent Love, Oppressive Liberation, and Infancy Narratives*,” *Journal of Theology and Sexuality*, forthcoming 2018.

⁶⁷¹ Please see: West, *The Academy of the Poor*, 36.

⁶⁷² “Motswana” is the singular form of “Batswana” and refers to a citizen of Botswana.

⁶⁷³ See: Musa W. Dube, “Reading for Decolonization (John 4:1-42),” in *Postcolonialism and Scriptural Reading*, ed. Laura E. Donaldson (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996), 37-59 (44), *HIV/AIDS and*

working with CBS outside of South Africa, with Avaren Ipsen being a particularly note-worthy example. In her monograph, *Sex Working and the Bible*, Ipsen informs the reader that she has a personal connection to the sex industry in the US and that this, in part, is the reason for her desire to “read with” sex workers and to campaign for greater legal protection for sex workers in the US. In addition to revealing this personal connection, Ipsen also takes the time to inform the reader of how this personal connection has affected the development of her research and the way in which she reads and relates to existing biblical scholarship on sex workers.⁶⁷⁴

Thus, both conducting an ethnographic study and positioning the self in light of those being “read with” are equally important regardless of whether or not the researcher is indigenous to said context. For example, whilst I have been explicit about my positionality as a working-class woman and daughter of a coal miner, making it clear why I am interested in the contextual realities of modern British coal miners, it would have been equally important for me to have included this situating of the self even if I was not personally connected to coal mining. This is because it is essential for all parties involved (the researcher, the researched, and the final audience of the written study) to understand why a researcher wanted to “read with” individuals from a certain context and the connections that exist, no matter how subtle or tenuous, between the researcher and the researched and the relationship that subsequently develops between them.

In addition to providing both the researcher and the eventual reader with an in-depth insight into the context from which the exegeses have originated, a written ethnography also provides researchers with an important opportunity to do justice to the lived and embodied realities that exist behind a research project. For example, a written ethnography should also function as a written acknowledgement of the researcher’s respect for, and acknowledgement of, the real lives of those that have been willing to contribute to their research project. A researcher should use the written ethnography as an opportunity to make clear that the study that follows relies upon, and is an account of, the lives of real people

the Curriculum: Methods of Integrating HIV/AIDS in Theological Programmes (Geneva: WCC, 2003), 105.

⁶⁷⁴ See: Ipsen, *Sex Working and the Bible*, 35-38.

and that whilst a research project may treat the realities of these people as "findings" or data, it must never be forgotten that they are representative of, and originate from, real people. This something that I have put into practice in this thesis.

CHAPTER FOUR. PUTTING THEORY INTO PRACTICE I - MY ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF MALE COAL-MINING CULTURE IN SOUTH DERBYSHIRE

The Heavy Cloud of Class

When planning and conducting this research project, I did not set out to directly analyse the issue of class, primarily owing to time constraints and the need for coherency. However, being from a working-class background I was alert to the fact that class may well present itself as an issue. I decided that the best approach to take regarding the issue of class in this context was to allow those I was studying to raise the issue themselves, without my prompting. This would then allow me to assess whether or not class was an issue in this context and whether I would need to consider it in my final analysis. I was therefore keen to avoid forcing the issue, which may have produced false data, and as a result of this I chose not to directly collect data about class.

As it transpired, class was an issue for the men participating in my study and it became a powerful and recurring trope in all of my data, therefore highlighting just how prominent an issue social class still is in contemporary Britain and how class plays an integral role in everyday experiences. My project is testament to Walkerdine, Lucey, and Melody’s statement that in Britain “[t]here is no denying that class is etched deeply into our culture and our psyches.”⁶⁷⁵

⁶⁷⁵ Valerie Walkerdine, Helen Lucey, and June Melody, “Growing Up Girl: Psychological Explorations of Gender and Class,” in *Off White: Readings on Power, Privilege, and Resistance*, eds. Michelle Fine et al. (London: Routledge, 2004), 98-113 (99).

As one might imagine, the class with which all participants in this study immediately identified was that of working-class. However, before I begin unpacking this identification and presenting examples of how “working-classness” was expressed, raised, and reflected upon in this research project, I will first address how I am using the term “working-class.”

The working-classness of the coal miners participating in this study should be viewed as an “all-pervading culture”⁶⁷⁶ that has been generationally learned and repeatedly enacted throughout their lives. Their experience and thus definition of class is therefore contextually constructed and functions as a permanent marker that is repeatedly “harked back to, [and] leaned upon as a fixed and still largely trustworthy reference in a world that is now difficult to understand,”⁶⁷⁷ making class a deeply significant and complex issue.

My acknowledgement of the need to examine the issue of class in this thesis is demonstrative of my reflexivity, as the following analysis emerged in response to the data collected. Similarly, my usage of the term “working-class” to refer to the men in this study is also reflective of my findings, as every individual involved in this project (including myself) openly identified as “working-class.” Finally, the way in which I define “working-classness” is also based upon how this project’s participants have defined it.

I am therefore mirroring the way Hoggart sought to construct his analysis of class in *The Uses of Literacy*. Here, Hoggart explains that his description and analysis of working-class culture is primarily based upon his own experience of growing-up in the urban North of England (Leeds) and that he used his personal knowledge of this cultural setting as the starting point for reflecting more widely upon class.⁶⁷⁸ In much the same way, I too am taking a specific cultural setting, in which I was raised, as my starting point. Whilst the following discussion of class is purposefully centred upon the reflections offered by the members of one particular community, such findings may well be applicable to other areas of Britain.

⁶⁷⁶ Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy*, 21.

⁶⁷⁷ Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy*, 18.

⁶⁷⁸ See: Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy*, 8-9.

Class and the Issue of Representation

My desire to use the definition of "working-class" offered by those participating in this project as my overall working definition of the term is the result of not only my personal ontology and epistemology, but also my engagement with the work of Stuart Hall, especially concerning the issue of representation. Hall defines "representation" as meaning one of the following:

1. To represent something is to describe or depict it, to call it up in the mind by description or portrayal or imagination; to place likeness of it before us in our mind or in the senses; as, for example, in the sentence, 'This picture represents the murder of Abel by Cain.'
2. To represent also means to symbolize, stand for, to be a specimen of, or to substitute for; as in the sentence, 'In Christianity, the cross represents the suffering and crucifixion of Christ.'⁶⁷⁹

Applying these definitions to human beings and the social world, Hall uses the term "representation" to explain the relationship between meaning, language, and culture. For Hall, the way in which human beings make sense of the world and then express their worldview in a meaningful way to others is through the process of representation. However, Hall distinguishes between two different "systems of representation"⁶⁸⁰ that collectively enable human beings to communicate with one another. These are: "*mental representations*"⁶⁸¹ (or "*conceptual maps*"⁶⁸²) and "*language*."⁶⁸³ The former consists of the way in which individuals mentally collate objects, people, and events with the concepts carried in their heads, which are then "*organized, arranged and classified into complex relations with one another.*"⁶⁸⁴

⁶⁷⁹ Stuart Hall, "The Work of Representation," in *Representation: Cultural Representation and Signifying Practices*, ed. Stuart Hall (London: SAGE, 2002), 13-74 (16).

⁶⁸⁰ Hall, "The Work of Representation," 17.

⁶⁸¹ Hall, "The Work of Representation," 18.

⁶⁸² Hall, "The Work of Representation," 18.

⁶⁸³ Hall, "The Work of Representation," 18.

⁶⁸⁴ Hall, "The Work of Representation," 18.

Hall describes this as the first stage of meaning making. When individuals share roughly the same conceptual map, and thus construct meaning and make sense of the world in a similar manner, we call this "culture."⁶⁸⁵ As this project seeks to examine the culture of South Derbyshire coal miners, what I am, in fact, examining is the product of their shared conceptual map. The issue of class is thus one of the many concepts that exist on an individual's conceptual map, together with other issues such as gender, sex, race, and ethnicity. The latter system of representation is that of language and it is through this shared system that we are "able to represent or exchange meanings and concepts"⁶⁸⁶ to others. Language is the shared tool by which people from different cultures can communicate. The "signs"⁶⁸⁷ of language enable us to translate our culturally-derived meanings into something meaningful to others.

However, this process of understanding another's "conceptual map" is a complex one that is open to misinterpretation and misunderstanding.⁶⁸⁸ Arbitrary "codes"⁶⁸⁹ have thus been developed to remedy this. These "codes" fix the relationship between concepts (a person's culture), signs (our shared language), and the objects about which we are talking.⁶⁹⁰ These "codes" govern our systems of representation and ensure that people from different cultures can communicate sensibly with one another. To explain this, Hall uses the example of a tree.⁶⁹¹ He argues that a person cannot call a tree whatever they like, as "tree" is the arbitrary, universally agreed upon "sign" for objects that are categorised as trees. By being forced to use the arbitrary word "tree" to describe the objects we recognise as trees, we can be sure that the "correct" meaning is being conveyed. Physical objects do not contain meaning but instead have a symbolic function,⁶⁹² as meaning is constructed and conveyed through codes and because of their arbitrary nature misunderstandings are avoided.

⁶⁸⁵ Hall, "The Work of Representation," 18.

⁶⁸⁶ Hall, "The Work of Representation," 18.

⁶⁸⁷ Hall, "The Work of Representation," 18.

⁶⁸⁸ Hall, "The Work of Representation," 19-22.

⁶⁸⁹ Hall, "The Work of Representation," 21-22.

⁶⁹⁰ Hall, "The Work of Representation," 21.

⁶⁹¹ See: Hall, "The Work of Representation," 21.

⁶⁹² See: Hall, "The Work of Representation," 26.

People are therefore not born "cultured persons"⁶⁹³ and neither are they born with ready-built "conceptual maps," but instead people "become"⁶⁹⁴ cultured and develop "conceptual maps" in accordance with the society in which they are raised. The social conventions, language, signs, and codes of the society that surrounds a person determines what "conceptual map" a person will hold in their head and thus what culture they will later identify as belonging to.⁶⁹⁵ I am therefore concerned with how the systems of representation function in the context of South Derbyshire coal miners and, in light of the focus of this subchapter, how class is understood, experienced, and articulated via these systems.

However, once we have understood representation, we are still left with the question "where does meaning reside?".⁶⁹⁶ Hall asserts that there are three theories that have been developed to answer this question: 1. The reflective approach; 2. The intentional approach; 3. The constructionist approach. Given that I am a committed constructivist/interpretivist, Hall's description of the constructionist approach to representation has played a central role in how I handled the issue of class within this project.

The constructionist approach acknowledges that fixed meanings cannot ever truly exist, as meaning is continuously (re-/de-) constructed. Meaning does not, therefore, reside within objects, but, instead, we use agreed upon language and signs to attribute meaning to objects.⁶⁹⁷ This, however, implies that language and signs are fixed, but these too can be re-/de-constructed over a much longer period of time.⁶⁹⁸

In addition, meaning making also relies upon interpretation. To construct one's own "conceptual map" and develop one's own representation of the world, one must first interpret the social world. Similarly, if one is to understand the meaning present in the articulations and actions of others, one must first interpret them.⁶⁹⁹ Meaning is therefore continuously being constructed and interpreted.

⁶⁹³ Hall, "The Work of Representation," 22.

⁶⁹⁴ Hall, "The Work of Representation," 22.

⁶⁹⁵ See: Hall, "The Work of Representation," 22.

⁶⁹⁶ See: Hall, "The Work of Representation," 24.

⁶⁹⁷ See: Hall, "The Work of Representation," 25.

⁶⁹⁸ Hall, "The Work of Representation," 23.

⁶⁹⁹ See: Hall, "The Work of Representation," 32.

As I align myself with the constructionist approach to representation, as well as the notion that not only is the social world constructed and constantly re-/deconstructed, but that our ability to understand how others construct the world also relies upon our ability to interpret, I am therefore solely interested in how the coal miners that participated in this project understand, define, and articulate the issue of class. My research embraces the "subjective aspects of class"⁷⁰⁰ as how I have opted to understand social class and to define working-class are directly reflective of the way in which this project's participants have understood and defined them. What follows is my interpretation of how the coal miners in this study have constructed, interpreted, articulated, and represented their working-class identity.

As my description of those participating in this project as working-class is based upon their own self-identification and as my definition of working-class is based upon how those participating in this project have defined it, it is not the purpose of this project to challenge or rebut this identification or definition. However, it is nonetheless pertinent to bring this identification with and definition of working-class into dialogue with some of the most recent studies being conducted on the issue of class in Britain to clarify what this identification and definition are in reference to. This is particularly important for this project as the way in which working-classness is defined by its participants differs significantly to the way in which working-classness is currently defined by the academy. Similarly, by bringing the coal miners' definition of working-class into dialogue with current academic definitions, I will be better able to articulate what exactly the coal miners are identifying with and how they are positioning themselves in relation to wider society.

In order to do this, I will first discuss how the British class system is currently being described by the academy, primarily drawing upon the work of Mike Savage,⁷⁰¹ who, like Skeggs, is also openly indebted to Bourdieu.⁷⁰² Secondly, I will

⁷⁰⁰ Walkerdine, Lucey, and Melody, "Growing Up Girl," 104.

⁷⁰¹ See: Mike Savage, et al., *Social Class in the 21st Century* (London: Pelican, 2015), "A New Model of Social Class? Findings from the BBC's Great British Class Survey Experiment," *Sociology* 47/2 (2013), 219-250.

⁷⁰² For example, Savage regularly cites Bourdieu's *Distinction*. See: Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction* (London: Routledge, 1984).

discuss how the coal miners participating in this project have defined their working-classness.

Academic Studies of Class

Savage's work on the issue of class in contemporary Britain is based upon the findings of two large-scale surveys: The BBC's Great British Class Survey (GBCS) and a supplementary, nationally-representative, face-to-face survey that was also conducted by the BBC, but used the quota sampling methods offered by the survey firm GfK. Both surveys were designed by a team of social scientists (headed by Savage) and ran on the BBC's website in 2011. They were brought to the attention of the general public by a series of adverts. The GBCS surveyed 161,400 people⁷⁰³ and the GfK survey was created as a supplementary survey to address the selection bias of the initial GBCS survey which attracted only certain members of society. This GfK attracted 1026 respondents.⁷⁰⁴

Savage's design and analysis of the two surveys sought to make a distinct move away from more traditional concepts of social class that were primarily based upon distinctions derived from an individual's social standing or occupation and which were prominent up until the 1980s,⁷⁰⁵ towards a new, "multi-dimensional construct"⁷⁰⁶ of class based upon access to, and engagement with, three specific types of capital: "economic capital (wealth and income),"⁷⁰⁷ "cultural capital (the ability to appreciate and engage with cultural goods, and credentials institutionalised through educational success),"⁷⁰⁸ and "social capital (contacts and

⁷⁰³ See: Savage, et al., "A New Model of Social Class?" 220 and *Social Class in the 21st Century*, 5.

⁷⁰⁴ See: Savage, et al., "A New Model of Social Class?" 223-224 and *Social Class in the 21st Century*, 5-20 and 409-411.

⁷⁰⁵ See: Savage, et al., "A New Model of Social Class?" 221 and *Social Class in the 21st Century* 31-45.

⁷⁰⁶ Savage, et al., "A New Model of Social Class?" 223.

⁷⁰⁷ Savage, et al., "A New Model of Social Class?" 223 and see: 227-229.

⁷⁰⁸ Savage, et al., "A New Model of Social Class?" 223 and see: 226-227.

connections which allow people to draw on their social networks)."709 The two surveys asked people about their access to these capitals "to draw fine-grained distinctions between people with different stocks of each of the three capitals."710 By assessing how much stock individuals have in these capitals, it is then possible to determine the boundaries of social class in contemporary Britain.

The data collected via the two surveys enabled Savage to identify a new seven-part class system, which consists of the following class groups: the "Elite [-] Very high economic capital (especially savings), high social capital, very high highbrow cultural capital,"711 the "Established middle class [-] High economic capital, high status of mean contacts, high highbrow and emerging cultural capital,"712 the "Technical middle class [-] High economic capital, very high mean social contacts, but relatively few contacts reported, moderate cultural capital,"713 the "New affluent workers [-] Moderately good economic capital, moderately poor mean score of social contacts, though high range, moderate highbrow but good emerging cultural capital,"714 the "Traditional working class [-] Moderately poor economic capital, though with reasonable house price, few social contacts, low highbrow and emerging cultural capital,"715 the "Emergent service workers [-] Moderately poor economic capital, though with reasonable household income, moderate social contacts, high emerging (but low highbrow) cultural capital,"716 and the "Precariat"717 [-] Poor economic capital, and the lowest scores on every other criterion."718

As I am concerned with the definition of working-class, I will focus my attention on Savage's findings regarding the traditional working-class category. Concerning the economic capital of the traditional working-class, Savage asserts

709 Savage, et al., "A New Model of Social Class?" 223 and see: 225-226.

710 Savage, et al., "A New Model of Social Class?" 223.

711 Savage, et al., "A New Model of Social Class?" 230.

712 Savage, et al., "A New Model of Social Class?" 230.

713 Savage, et al., "A New Model of Social Class?" 230.

714 Savage, et al., "A New Model of Social Class?" 230.

715 Savage, et al., "A New Model of Social Class?" 230.

716 Savage, et al., "A New Model of Social Class?" 230.

717 The Precariat group has been analysed in greater depth by Guy Standing, see: Guy Standing, *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class* (London: Bloomsbury, 2011), *A Precariat Charter: From Denizens to Citizens* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014).

718 Savage, et al., "A New Model of Social Class?" 230.

that they are less advantaged and moderately poor, but often own their own home and have modest savings.⁷¹⁹ Regarding social capital, he asserts that they have a restricted range of social contacts and their average status scores are moderate.⁷²⁰ Concerning cultural capital, they score moderately on highbrow culture, but low on emerging culture, they have few graduates, and traditional working-class occupations (such as lorry drivers, cleaners, and electricians) are overrepresented.⁷²¹ In addition, Savage notes that the group "is strongly over-represented amongst old industrial areas"⁷²² and that the group is predominantly female. Ultimately, Savage concludes that this group can be considered "a residue of earlier historical periods... embodying characteristics of the 'traditional working class'. We might see it as a 'throwback' to an earlier phase in Britain's social history, as part of an older generational formation."⁷²³

Savage's identification of a seven-part class system and his analysis of the traditional working-class category highlights that twentieth-century understandings of social class are now out of date, not only because such understandings fail to consider the multi-dimensional interaction between economic, social, and cultural resources, but also because the once stalwarts of the British class system – such as the working-class – have passed beyond changing and are now disappearing. For example, only 2% of participants in the GBSC and 14% of participants in the GfK actually fit into the traditional working-class category.⁷²⁴ In addition to this, Savage's study also highlights how the next generation of the would-be traditional working-class are now part of different class groups, most dominantly, the new affluent workers. For example, Savage states that the new affluent workers "seem, in many respects, to be the children of the 'traditional working class', and they might thus be said to exemplify the stark break in working-class culture which has been evident as a result of de-industrialisation, mass unemployment, immigration

⁷¹⁹ Savage, et al., "A New Model of Social Class?" 240.

⁷²⁰ Savage, et al., "A New Model of Social Class?" 240.

⁷²¹ Savage, et al., "A New Model of Social Class?" 240.

⁷²² Savage, et al., "A New Model of Social Class?" 240.

⁷²³ Savage, et al., "A New Model of Social Class?" 240.

⁷²⁴ Savage, et al., "A New Model of Social Class?" 230 and *Social Class in the 21st Century*,

and the restricting of urban space."⁷²⁵ Thus "[t]o this extent, new social formations appear to be emerging out of the tendrils of the traditional working class"⁷²⁶ and the working-class are becoming fragmented into evermore segmented forms. If I consider myself in light of Savage's analysis, this certainly seems to be true, as I took the survey and came out as a new affluent worker.

Savage's identification of the changing state of class within Britain can be seen as just a small part of the overall "crisis of identities"⁷²⁷ that has occurred in the wake of postmodernity. Hall describes this crisis as "[a] distinctive type of structural change [that] is transforming modern societies in the late twentieth century."⁷²⁸ During this period of change, all aspects of once well-established identities become fragmented, dislocated, and decentred,⁷²⁹ effecting how we understand and identify class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, race, and nationality. Ultimately, the crisis of identities results in the "loss of a stable 'sense of self'"⁷³⁰ as individuals are not only displaced or decentred from their place in the social world, but also from their own selves.⁷³¹ In light of this crisis of identities, Hall identifies modern humanity as being in the post-modern stage of identity, thus making human beings "post-modern subject[s]."⁷³² The identity of post-modern subjects is defined by fragmentation, contradiction, and confusion⁷³³ as human beings can no longer claim to have "fixed, essential or permanent"⁷³⁴ identities. Thus, the fragmentation of class is symptomatic of a wider state of crisis.

⁷²⁵ Savage, et al., "A New Model of Social Class?" 246.

⁷²⁶ Savage, et al., "A New Model of Social Class?" 246.

⁷²⁷ Stuart Hall, "The Question of Cultural Identity," in *Modernity and Its Futures*, eds. Stuart Hall, David Held, and Tony McGrew (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), 273-325 (274).

⁷²⁸ Hall, "The Question of Cultural Identity," 274.

⁷²⁹ See: Hall, "The Question of Cultural Identity," 274.

⁷³⁰ Hall, "The Question of Cultural Identity," 275.

⁷³¹ See: Hall, "The Question of Cultural Identity," 275.

⁷³² Hall, "The Question of Cultural Identity," 275.

⁷³³ See: Hall, "The Question of Cultural Identity," 276-277.

⁷³⁴ Hall, "The Question of Cultural Identity," 277.

Defining Class: The Coal Miners’ Definition

In spite of Savage’s contemporary analysis of social class, the way in which the term working-class has been used in this research project is not based upon Savage’s analysis, but rather it is based upon the “out of date” understanding of class that Savage’s research in fact seeks to replace. This is because the definition of working-class used by this study’s participants stems from, and is based upon, the class system that Savage’s study seeks to update, a system that only makes a distinction between working-class, middle-class, and upper-class and bases such distinctions almost solely upon occupation. The participants in this project therefore articulated their understanding of being working-class as being based solely upon their employment as coal miners. Such a definition therefore confirms that at a grassroots level “the occupational structure... [is still]... enduringly... seen as providing a framework within which the “class structure” can be mapped.”⁷³⁵ This analysis is based on a variety of encounters that occurred during my fieldwork that I will now recount.

Whilst I never directly raised the issue of class, this did not mean that I shied away from discussing it whenever it was raised by participants. As I noticed that the issue of class was lurking beneath the surface of my data early on in the research process, I decided that I would use the moments when participants raised the issue as an opportunity to discuss it in depth. However, it was rarely possible or appropriate to discuss class when out in the field, primarily owing to the sensitivity of the topic and the often *ad hoc* nature of my field research. But once the CBS sessions began and once I realised how promising the data was that these sessions were generating, I concluded that the best opportunity to ask about class was going to be after a CBS session where the reading being produced focused upon class. Therefore, not only would class then be raised by the coal miners themselves in

⁷³⁵ Walkerdine, Lucey, and Melody, “Growing Up Girl,” 103.

response to the text being read, but I would also be better able to manage the sensitivity of the topic as it was being raised in a setting that had already been established as a safe environment where I had the trust of and a rapport with the men involved.

The reading produced during session five focusing on Proverbs 18:1-24 sparked reflections on class. Not wanting to disturb the progress of the reading being created, I waited until the session had finished to ask more questions about their reflections. Upon finishing the session, the group asked me if there was anything in their reading that stood out to me. Asking me questions of this nature became a regular wind-down activity after each session, as the group would frequently ask me what I thought about their reading and if I thought any particular aspects were striking, shocking, surprising, and so on. This activity also provided me with an opportunity to ensure that I had understood their analyses as I could ask questions about aspects I felt were underdeveloped or that I did not fully understand. I seized this opportunity to say that their reflections on class were the most interesting to me and that I would like to ask them further about it, what class they identified as, and how they have (if at all) experienced class. This line of questioning provoked laughter from the group as they could not believe I needed to ask what class they were, whether they had "experienced" class (which they thought was ridiculous "academic talk"), or that I was surprised class played an integral role in their worldview. The general response was: "We're coal miners! We're working-class!"

In response to the abruptness with which my questioning was shot-down, I also started to laugh, as of course they are working-class and of course I am foolish for asking my "academic" questions! However, whilst I already knew that they would identify in this manner, I knew that for this project when this identification occurred I would need to probe why it was obvious they are working-class. After much discussion and gentle questioning, it became evident that their definition of working-class hinged on the following three characteristics:

1. A manual labour profession (with particular emphasis on jobs that require "graft," "blood, sweat, and tears," "pain," and "dust and dirt";

2. A working-class heritage comprised of both family and community;
3. Limited access to wider resources, most notably, education.

Class, for this group of men, was therefore the product of these three social and cultural capitals. When a person embodied all of these characteristics, they would be considered working-class and when a group of individuals shared these characteristics, with particular emphasis on sharing the same profession, the group would then be considered collectively as a working-class community. It also became evident that whilst the three characteristics are interconnected and that all three are required to define someone as working-class, one aspect clearly took precedence over the others—the first characteristic of occupation.

Occupation and Class

The statement “We’re coal miners! We’re working-class!” is probably the most telling illustration of how the coal miners in my study not only define working-class status, but also how they identify as part of this stratification. It was their vocation as coal miners that was the key signifier of their working-class status. Based upon a series of statements (that will be listed momentarily), I have been able to isolate three reasons for this:

1. The long history of coal mining being one of the traditional, low-paid, hard-labour, often generationally inherited⁷³⁶ professions of Britain’s once vast working-class populace;
2. That coal mining is believed to be a profession that the middle and upper-classes have disdain for, a disdain that is enhanced by the fact that they cannot do without it. For example, whilst coal miners may be looked down upon as “vulgar,” “rough,” “crude,” “knobbers,” “louts,” “thick,” and

⁷³⁶ By using “generational” I intend to evoke the notion that often sons followed fathers and grandfathers into the coal-mining profession.

"luddites,"⁷³⁷ they are still needed to fuel the country. Their labour is the
"backbone of the country";

3. The fact that coal mining is a dirty, labour intensive, and dangerous job that only a certain "type" (and thus, class) of man would be able to complete. Here, the coal miners sought to directly disassociate themselves from men who work in middle-class professions (such as "office boys," bankers, and any profession that required smart clothes and no manual labour). In doing so, they revealed the way in which their masculinity is also a product of, and/or contributing factor to, their working-class identification.

According to this breakdown, being a coal miner therefore provides *de facto* working-class status. A coal miner cannot be anything other than working-class. However, many of the above statements do not describe the realities of the coal miners in this study. For example, whilst historically coal miners have been poorly paid, this is certainly not true of today's coal miners. Therefore, whilst these statements may not be true for the coal miners in my study, they still directly identify with each statement, regardless of its accuracy for their own circumstances, owing to their coal miner status. Thus, what was true for their ancestors is, *ipso facto*, true for them too because they are also coal miners. Therefore, there is a collective association with these reasons that transcends history and reality and goes beyond the current contextual circumstances of these particular coal miners. Phrases like "us miners" and "the men," as well as repeated allusions to shared experiences such as "blue medals" (in reference to the blue scars of coal miners), "sacrifice," and "blood and coal" emphasise the timeless collectively of all coal miners.

The fact that modern coal miners do not necessarily experience these reasons in exactly the same way as their historical counterparts does not really matter, as they experience them empathetically through their belonging to the same collective. Their employment as coal miners therefore provides them with membership in the shared heritage of coal mining and their experience of being a

⁷³⁷ Used here in a derogatory sense to simply refer to an uneducated working-class person, rather than the historic group of workers who destroyed industrial machinery in the 1800s.

coal miner gives them a direct insight into, and enables them to have great empathy for, coal miners that did once experience all these factors. Belonging to this “club” means that whilst modern coal miners might not experience these factors directly or that when they do, it is to a much lesser extent, they nevertheless experience them as part of the baggage of their heritage.

The characteristic of employment highlights one of the most significant findings of my ethnographic research, namely the strong sense of collectivity that permeates every aspect of coal-mining culture and identity and the way this collectivity results in coal miners responding with one voice or as a monolithic group, something that is enhanced by a powerful “Us versus Them” mentality, which I will examine momentarily. Thus, whilst it may sound flippant when I refer to the subjects of this study as “the men,” “the coal miners,” or “the group” (especially when it comes to the CBS sessions), I am in fact doing so consciously and in a considered way, as they really do respond with one voice.⁷³⁸ As one coal miner from the South Derbyshire Mining Preservation Group (SDMPG)⁷³⁹ told me, “the attitude of miners and the workplace hasn’t changed... there is a set attitude of miners, this will never change, we are all the same and get by as a collective. There is a very strong group attitude.” Similarly, another SDMPG member stated: “it is a world that men can only understand, it is a special form of camaraderie... you don’t talk about it at home, women don’t understand mining, full stop!” Such a statement not only emphasises the unique collectivity of coal miners, but also the way this collectivity is linked to their masculinity.⁷⁴⁰

⁷³⁸ The collective voice of coal miners can also be found in all extant studies on coal mining in Britain, thus corroborating my own findings. For example, see all the works produced by David Bell.

⁷³⁹ The SDMPG are a non-profit making organisation situated in Church Gresley, Swadlincote that aim to preserve and promote the area’s mining heritage. They were founded in 1999 by a group of volunteers (all of whom are ex-coal miners or the wives of ex-coal miners). Over the years they have amassed a huge collection of coal mining related artefacts that are housed either at their headquarters at Gresley Old Hall or at a permanent exhibition at Conkers Discovery Park. The time I spent with the members of the SDMPG are detailed in Appendix 8.

⁷⁴⁰ Much of the data this research project utilises can be described as the “voice of the participant/s.” However, data of this nature is often romanticised, privileged, and accepted as such, unchallenged. To acknowledge and address this problematic aspect of using “voice-as-data,” I utilised Lisa A. Mazzei and Alecia Y. Jackson’s method of “plugging-in.” See: Lisa A. Mazzei and Alecia Y. Jackson, “Complicating Voice in a Refusal to ‘Let Participants Speak for Themselves,’” *Qualitative Inquiry* 18/9 (2012): 745-751. “Plugging-in” challenges “simplistic treatments of voice in qualitative research that beckon voices to “speak for themselves” or that reduce complicated and conflicting

Hoggart similarly asserts that employment plays a key role in establishing class identity. For example, he explains that the working-class often work for a wage and not a salary,⁷⁴¹ that the occupations of the working-class are “usually labourers, skilled or unskilled, or craftsmen and perhaps apprentice trained,”⁷⁴² and finally, of those that are self-employed, they usually belong to a specific service group, such as a “‘cobbler’, ‘barber’, ‘grocer’, ‘bike-mender’ or ‘cast-off clothing dealer.’”⁷⁴³ Whilst Hoggart’s study is relatively dated, the fact that the men in my study also see profession as the most important signifier of their working-class identity confirms my assertion that whilst such a definition may be “out of date” according to Savage, on a grassroots level it is still the most dominant means of identifying class. Therefore, although Savage’s assertion that Britain’s class system has dramatically altered in the past few decades may well be correct, this does not mean that those within the system see it any differently or that the changes that have taken place are being felt by the wider populace.

Heritage and Class

The second characteristic identified as defining someone as working-class was that of heritage, which is being used here to refer to an individual’s personal family history and geographical situatedness. More importantly, it also refers to these two aspects in relation to their profession. This second characteristic demonstrates how the characteristic of profession is central to the overall identification of a person as working-class. In terms of the men in my study, this referred to whether or not a

voices to analytical “chunks” that can be interpreted free of context and circumstance.” Mazzei and Jackson, “Complicating Voice in a Refusal to ‘Let Participants Speak for Themselves,’” 745. Therefore, whilst the individual voices of the men participating in this project echoed one another as a clear collective voice, the clarity of this voice does not mean it is beyond complicating. I sought to complicate the “voice-as-data” utilised in this project by “plugging-in” my own voice, “theoretical voices, voices of [my] teachers/mentors, voices of other scholars, and so on. Rather than succumbing to the primacy of ONE voice.” Mazzei and Jackson, “Complicating Voice in a Refusal to ‘Let Participants Speak for Themselves,’” 747.

⁷⁴¹ Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy*, 9.

⁷⁴² Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy*, 10.

⁷⁴³ Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy*, 9.

person is from a family that has a long history of being employed by the coal-mining industry and for how long one's family has lived in a coal-mining community. For example, every coal miner that I spoke to had other male relatives that had also been employed by the industry, usually fathers and grandfathers, but also uncles and brothers. In addition, many of the men also had female relatives that were employed by the same industry, but in non-mining roles, such as canteen workers and administrative assistants. Coal mining was therefore "in the blood" of these men—a profound reflection that I will return to shortly. In addition to this, each coal miner in my study also identified as being "local" to my research field and having a family that had lived in its vicinity for a long time.⁷⁴⁴ This is certainly true for my own family, the paternal side of which have lived in South Derbyshire for over 300 years. I sought to confirm this each time I spoke to any coal miner during my research by asking questions such as, "where are you from?", "how long have you lived there?", and "has anyone else in your family also been employed as a coal miner?" Such questioning always evoked loud and proud responses along the lines of "I'm from Newhall, always have been" or "I'm from Swad, born and bred," and "yeh, me dad and grandad." Similarly, even though coal miners have become a somewhat diaspora community and have had to start travelling to collieries much further away or have had to move nearer to such collieries, they are still able to maintain a sense of being local to South Derbyshire as whilst they may not be mining in South Derbyshire, they are mining alongside other South Derbyshire coal miners as they have all had to relocate. For example, one coal miner at the SDMPG told me, "mining communities have changed dramatically, former miners who have worked with each other elsewhere end up working with each other again later owing to the closure of mines and the need to move elsewhere to the remaining few."

Many of the men I spoke with had powerful childhood memories of coal mining. For example, one coal miner's earliest memory was seeing his grandfather, completely blackened with coal dust, getting off the work bus on his way home from the pit whilst he played in the street with his friends. Similarly, memories of

⁷⁴⁴ A map of my research field is provided in my appendices.

fathers and grandfathers “having a word” at their employing colliery about getting their sons a job was common, along with memories of grandfathers bathing at home downstairs in a tin bath after work or recalling how their grandmothers would complain that the “moleskins”⁷⁴⁵ their grandfather wore to work would soon be so filthy they would get up and walk out of the house on their own.

A central factor to being able to identify as working-class and to be identified as working-class by others, then, was the tracing of this working-classness back through one’s family, which for these men was tied to tracing the heritage of coal mining in their family.

Again, Hoggart’s examination of working-class culture also identifies having a working-class heritage as being an essential characteristic of an individual identifying as working-class. For example, Hoggart asserts that the core of working-class culture is located in the “personal, the concrete, the local”⁷⁴⁶ and that “it is embodied in the idea of, first, the family, and second, the neighbourhood.”⁷⁴⁷ Thus my research findings are consistent with those of other projects focusing on Britain’s working-class communities. Similarly, Walkerdine, Lucey, and Melody also highlight how “[g]eographical location fuses powerfully”⁷⁴⁸ with class location. For example, they examine how the “processes of residential differentiation”⁷⁴⁹ (specifically in terms of the stigmatisation of living in a council house) inform class identification and how moving to a different type of house in a different type of area can change what class a person identifies with.⁷⁵⁰

⁷⁴⁵ A type of hardwearing and waterproof trouser often worn by coal miners.

⁷⁴⁶ Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy*, 22.

⁷⁴⁷ Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy*, 22.

⁷⁴⁸ Walkerdine, Lucey, and Melody, “Growing Up Girl,” 104.

⁷⁴⁹ Walkerdine, Lucey, and Melody, “Growing Up Girl,” 105.

⁷⁵⁰ See: Walkerdine, Lucey, and Melody, “Growing Up Girl,” 104-105.

Education and Class

Finally, the third characteristic can be defined as a lack of access to social resources, principally education. Having limited access to education and being excluded from participation in key centres of learning was also identified as being an integral marker of working-classness. For example, I have now lost count of how many times during this research project, when describing the focus of my research, I have heard the response: "But why? We're just thick coal miners." It was deeply disheartening to be repeatedly faced with the assumption that just because they are coal miners (or just because they are working-class) their voice was not worthy of being heard or that what they had to say held nothing of interest or merit. Over time, I have gradually developed a go-to rebuttal for such situations. However, whilst this speech always receives vigorous nods of the head and rapturous calls of "yeah, you're right!", I could tell that this was often just for my benefit and that no matter how enthusiastically, convincingly, proudly, or loudly I argued my case, it would not alter their opinion about how little their voices are valued.

A further educational obstacle I had to negotiate was not just that those participating in my study believed that their opinion was of little interest to those inhabiting the ivory towers of the world, but that actually participating in something education-related was deemed to hold little value. Thus, it was often an uphill struggle to engage participants for any greater length of time than a short, informal chat or to get them to submit information via any "academic" methods. For example, by identifying the coal miners' task to read and annotate the biblical texts we were studying in advance of the sessions as "homework," the coal miners participating in the CBS sessions demonstrated what they actually thought of such tasks. When I introduced this task, the group went to great lengths to ridicule it and to make it clear to me that they "do not do reading and writing" and that they never did homework at school so I should be grateful that they were willing to do this for me. Such a response was made alongside further comments regarding the

“bizarre” and “obscure” nature of academia, as well as reflections on why I wanted to conduct the research I was doing.

Throughout this project such questioning has become rather old-hat as I regularly faced comments expressing the perceived pointlessness of academia, its self-indulgent and ivory-tower nature, and the “toff” and “knobbiness” of those employed by it.⁷⁵¹ Whilst much of this was expressed through humour, I can assert with certainty that humour was used to mask their true feelings of disinterest, disengagement, disenfranchisement, and disdain for both educational systems and those they deem “educated.”

Traditionally, the lack of access to, and the subsequent lack of attributing value to, education was primarily because of poverty. Families from working-class communities simply did not have the money to afford the luxury of education. After achieving what at best can be described as a basic education, children would go out to work to earn money to contribute to the household. This was the case for all of the coal miners in my study. For example, it was regularly noted that: “You had to work. Ya mam wunt keep ya fa free!” or “I needed the money. So I just followed me dad to the pit. It wah good money. Better than being at tech.” In addition to this, almost all the coal miners in my study left school between the ages of 14 and 16 and any that went on to gain further qualifications did so through apprentice schemes connected to the coal-mining industry, for example, becoming an industrial electrician.

Achieving an education was therefore pitted against the need to survive, with education almost always losing the battle. However, in the years that have passed, a number of changes have been introduced to help working-class people gain better access to education, with some organisations being established solely for those from coal-mining communities.⁷⁵²

⁷⁵¹ One particularly humorous example of this attitude occurred when the CBS group re-enacted the University Challenge scene from the episode “Bambi” of the television series *The Young Ones*. In this scene, the main characters, Vyvyan, Rik, Neil, and Mike (all of whom are working-class) appear as representatives of “Scumbag College” on the gameshow University Challenge. They are pitted against “Footlights College, Oxbridge.” During our discussion, one member of the group parodied this scene by exhorting “Hi! I’m X, reading the Beano from Scumbag College!”

⁷⁵² For example, with the founding of the Mining Industry Act of 1920, the Miners Welfare Committee was established in 1921, which then became the Miners Welfare Commission. In 1952 this became the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation (CISWO), which still operates to this day.

Such organisations were established with the primary objective of supporting "former miners and their families with help and advice to alleviate disadvantage arising from disability, ill health or financial hardship."⁷⁵³ However, they also aim to aid coal miners and their dependants in gaining access to education, in particular, Higher Education. Taglines such as "Improving lives in coalfield communities"⁷⁵⁴ are indicative of this purpose. The very existence of such funds indicates that those affiliated with the coal-mining industry have traditionally not had access to education because of poverty. However, one can be forgiven for thinking that as these organisations still only offer money to help individuals afford a better education, money is still the only issue preventing those from coal-mining backgrounds getting an education. This is not the case; social and cultural reasons contribute too.

Therefore, just because funding for education now exists, it does not mean that they are readily seized, as a great number of social and cultural barriers still bar the way, with such barriers often being much more difficult to overcome. For example, when discussing the mental barriers that occur as a result of being working-class with the coal miners participating in the CBS sessions, it was noted that one of the most significant mental barriers was the anxiety about not being "good enough" to go to university or to enter certain places or talk with certain people. All five of the men argued that they were "looked down on" and thought of as "thick knobbers" by the rest of society, thus meaning that certain places "are not for the likes of us." However, it became clear that such beliefs did not always stem from direct experience, but instead stemmed from the history of how the working-class have been treated and perceived in Britain. For example, none of them were able to cite direct examples of when they had in fact been called "thick coal miners" or when they had been denied access to something because they are working-class, especially as many of them now participate in middle-class activities, such as eating

As well as managing their own fund, CISWO is now also the trustee of the Miner's Welfare National Education Fund (MWNEF). The purpose of the MWNEF is to encourage those coming from coal-mining backgrounds to achieve a better education and to enter into Higher Education institutions. See: CISWO, "Education Fund," 2016, <http://www.ciswo.org.uk/other-services/education-fund>.

⁷⁵³ CISWO, "Home," 2016, <http://www.ciswo.org.uk/>.

⁷⁵⁴ CISWO, "Home."

in “posh” restaurants, going away on city-breaks, and purchasing designer or luxury goods.

All of their statements were based on the assumption that as there is a long history of the working-class being looked down upon in Britain, they too are also looked down upon. For example, part of our discussion focused upon how education was treated in their homes when they were children. It was the general consensus that whilst they were not directly told that they could not pursue a better education (with a number of them even taking the 11+ exams), it was simply not talked about or pushed as an option, as it was assumed that they would not want or need an education as they would take working-class jobs, just like their fathers and grandfathers had. In addition to this, all of the men explained how it was also made overtly clear that money was the answer to all problems and that the main goal in life was to earn as much as possible. Rather than planning and investing in a career that would lead to vast earnings in the future, money in the now was sought after instead. Such findings mirror those of Willis’s study *Learning to Labour*, where he highlights that it is working-class culture itself, with one central aspect being the immediacy with which money should be acquired, that encourages working-class children to end up in working-class jobs. Central to this is the belief that an education does not provide a person with the skills necessary for “real life” and that as money is needed to not only survive but to also live life, education becomes a waste of money as it gets in the way of or delays the earning of money.⁷⁵⁵

Willis’s study is especially pertinent for my own research as the boys (or “lads”) his study focuses upon might as well have been the men that participated in my study. Willis’s study focuses on a group of working-class boys from the Midlands area in their mid-teens between 1972 and 1975. The men that participated in my study would have also been in their mid-to-late teens at this time and are also from the Midlands. To confirm my suspicion that much of what Willis writes is also true for the men in my study, I read several passages of his volume aloud to a number of coal miners. One section in particular elicited responses that proved my suspicions

⁷⁵⁵ See: Willis, *Learning to Labour*, 39-43.

were right—where Willis describes how the boys in his study adapted their school uniform according to the fashion of the time: “At the moment the ‘lads’ look’ includes longish well-groomed hair, platform-type shoes, wide collared shirt turned over waisted coat or denim jerkin, plus the still obligatory flared trousers.”⁷⁵⁶ The coal miners that I read this section to found it highly humorous to hear such a description, as they readily identified that they too once dressed like this, with one noting, “that was me alright!”.

Willis’s reflections on the lack of value that working-class culture attributes to education could very well be applied to the men in my study. Willis describes how the “lads” would skip school and neglect their schoolwork to work “in the real world” and earn money. Willis’s study thus demonstrates a reason why the men in my study have such deep-rooted anxieties about education: it is because they have been educated by the working-class culture they were born into to believe that formal education is not as important or useful as making money or making your way in the real world. As Willis notes towards the end of his study, “[n]o conceivable number of certificates amongst the working class will make for a classless society”⁷⁵⁷ and whilst some working-class people do “make it,” the mobility that education may provide working-class people with may mean nothing at all if a classed society continues to exist.⁷⁵⁸

When one of the coal miners at the SDMPG described how his decision to follow his father into coal mining rather than take a place on an apprenticeship was based upon how much money he could earn at the time, Willis’s research helped me understand this as a product of this participant’s working-class upbringing. The fact that he could earn £2 a week more as a coal miner than as an apprentice was enough to convince him to take the job. It did not matter that eventually the apprenticeship might have led to more money, what mattered was what money he could make at the time.

Whilst none of the men in my study had been directly told they could not pursue Higher Education, they all agreed that they had not considered that they

⁷⁵⁶ Willis, *Learning to Labour*, 17.

⁷⁵⁷ Willis, *Learning to Labour*, 127.

⁷⁵⁸ Willis, *Learning to Labour*, 128.

were able to pursue such a thing because the environment in which they were raised did not value it and thus dismissed it. The mocking of "swots" and "bookworms" was something that all the coal miners remembered as being a prominent feature of school (something that Willis's study also highlights, but this time the "lads" call any dedicated students "'ear'oles" or "lobes"⁷⁵⁹) and that it was the norm for boys to simply follow unthinkingly in their father's footsteps.

The lack of value attributed to education, however, results in the development of anxiety about being deemed uneducated or "thick" as almost all of the coal miners I spoke to believed that the outside world thought they were "just thick coal miners." In order to manage this anxiety about being uneducated, the coal miners then 'othered' those deemed educated (i.e. the middle-class), with the resultant negative interactions with this 'other' transforming the initial anxiety into a deep dislike or hatred of the 'other.' The constructing of the middle-class as 'other' thus strengthens the boundaries of the working-class by justifying and legitimising working-class behaviour and traits, whilst simultaneously marking any middle-class behaviour and traits as undesirable, negative, or open for ridicule.

The need for the men in this study to construct the middle-class as 'other' and as negatively distinct from themselves is not surprising considering the already well-established and powerful "Us versus Them" mentality that exists within the coal-mining industry. For example, the need to construct the world as a continual battle between "Us versus Them" (with "us" being either specifically coal miners or more generally the working-class and "them" usually being an authority figure) purposefully creates fixed boundaries in the social world. I will explore this mentality in greater depth shortly as it primarily relates to the relationship between colliery owners and the wider workforce, but for now, when we apply this mentality to social class, we are presented with a clear demonstration of how creating 'others' and pitting one's own group against such 'others' can strengthen one's individual and collective identity. Therefore, by collectively disliking the middle and upper-classes, and the behaviours and traits that mark such individuals, coal miners strengthen their collective bonds and ratify their position as working-class.

⁷⁵⁹ Willis, *Learning to Labour*, 14.

The coal miners' inclination to define their own class status by comparing it to an 'other' is nothing unique, as marking the many different individuals and groups we meet in the social world as 'other' and highlighting how they are different from ourselves is a common means of establishing and maintaining identity. Hall asserts that in order to define oneself, one needs to define who one is not, thus the self is defined only once the self's 'other' is defined.⁷⁶⁰ Whilst Hall's work focuses on race, he asserts that the same principles can be applied to all markers of identity.⁷⁶¹ Difference and 'othering' are therefore central to establishing identity.

As Hall's work is primarily concerned with race, he focuses on demonstrating how difference and 'othering' are used to establish race identities and, in particular, how racialised discourse makes use of binary oppositions to establish identity. For example, Hall explains how whiteness is aligned with "good" and blackness is aligned with "bad."⁷⁶² In addition to this, when looking at how signs work in relation to meaning making, Hall notes that meanings are often derived from our ability to make comparisons and distinctions.⁷⁶³ Humanity's ability and need to recognise difference is therefore essential to meaning making.⁷⁶⁴ My research demonstrates how the same can be said of class. For example, and as Skeggs has already demonstrated, the working-class are often aligned with vulgarity, crudeness, and improper behaviour, whereas the middle and upper-classes are often aligned with decency, sophistication, and proper behaviour.

However, this utilisation of difference for constructing identity very easily falls into stereotyping behaviour. Stereotyping, Hall argues, is very difficult for humans to avoid as it is central to how they make sense of the world. Stereotyping therefore occurs as a result of humanity's need to categorise the world into "types." "Typification"⁷⁶⁵ is therefore used by humans to make meaning. Because of this, we are naturally inclined to apply this to people, which then results in 'othering' and stereotyping. The process of stereotyping is described by Sander

⁷⁶⁰ See: Stuart Hall, "The Spectacle of the 'Other'," in *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, ed. Stuart Hall (London: SAGE 2002), 223-279 (238).

⁷⁶¹ See: Hall, "The Spectacle of the 'Other'," 225.

⁷⁶² See: Hall, "The Spectacle of the 'Other'," 243.

⁷⁶³ See: Hall, "The Work of Representation," 31.

⁷⁶⁴ See: Hall, "The Work of Representation," 31.

⁷⁶⁵ Hall, "The Spectacle of the 'Other'," 257.

Gilman as being an essential human trait that enables human beings to not only create the self, but to also manage their many anxieties about the world,⁷⁶⁶ which for the coal miners in this project transpired to be anxieties about their education.

Gilman argues that the process of stereotyping begins in childhood when human beings first begin to develop a sense of self.⁷⁶⁷ As infants, humans begin to realise that everything around them is not an extension of the self, but is instead something separate and external. This leads to the development of anxieties, owing to the realisation that we cannot control what is external to itself.⁷⁶⁸ In order to manage these anxieties, we split the world into the good and the bad, with the good being the aspects we can control (the self) and the bad being those we cannot control (the 'other').⁷⁶⁹ As adults, we then continue this behaviour so much so that an "us and them" mentality develops. It is thus in our nature to divide the world into the safe and the harmful and it has come to be key part of our survival instinct.⁷⁷⁰

However, Gilman reminds us that the line we draw between good and bad and "us and them" is, in fact, imaginary as it exists solely because of our own mental representations of the world.⁷⁷¹ Because of this, the 'other' only exists as a product of the self and is constructed via an internal mental process. There is nothing in the world that makes a person or a group 'other,' then, it is the self that does this.⁷⁷² Stereotypes are therefore produced when the self feels threatened, and a clear mental representation of one's 'other' restores and preserves the self. Because of this, stereotypes are "crude"⁷⁷³ "palimpsests"⁷⁷⁴ that divide the world into polar extremes to "buffer us against our most urgent fears by extending them, making it possible for us to act as though their source were beyond our control."⁷⁷⁵

⁷⁶⁶ See: Sander Gilman, "The deep structure of stereotypes," in *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, ed. Stuart Hall (London: SAGE, 2002), 284-285 (284).

⁷⁶⁷ See: Gilman, "The deep structure of stereotypes," 284.

⁷⁶⁸ See: Gilman, "The deep structure of stereotypes," 284.

⁷⁶⁹ See: Gilman, "The deep structure of stereotypes," 284.

⁷⁷⁰ See: Gilman, "The deep structure of stereotypes," 284.

⁷⁷¹ See: Gilman, "The deep structure of stereotypes," 284.

⁷⁷² See: Gilman, "The deep structure of stereotypes," 284-285.

⁷⁷³ Gilman, "The deep structure of stereotypes," 284.

⁷⁷⁴ Gilman, "The deep structure of stereotypes," 284.

⁷⁷⁵ Gilman, "The deep structure of stereotypes," 284.

However, citing the work of Richard Dyer, Hall asserts that there are three key differences between "typing" and "stereotyping":⁷⁷⁶ 1. "Stereotyping reduces, essentializes, naturalizes and fixes 'difference'";⁷⁷⁷ 2. Stereotyping splits the world, most commonly into normal and abnormal, and then excludes;⁷⁷⁸ 3. Stereotyping most frequently occurs when "there are gross inequalities of power."⁷⁷⁹ Therefore, whilst humanity may naturally need to divide the world into types, stereotyping is a perversion of this need and is reflective of the power structures created by humanity. Hall builds on this difference between typing and stereotyping by examining their potential to spiral towards fantasy and fetish, both of which Hall describes as direct products of inequalities in power.⁷⁸⁰

One way in which the coal miners' anxiety about class and its connection to education manifested itself during my research was at the opening reception of a public engagement with research exhibition I was involved in.⁷⁸¹ As my contribution to this exhibition was based on data derived from the CBS portion of my research, I invited the coal miners that participated in these sessions to accompany me to the exhibition. However, this invite required a great deal of negotiation as only two coal miners agreed to attend and they were greatly concerned about visiting the university and mixing with middle-class "nutty professors."

Whilst both coal miners were anxious about the event, they handled it in very different ways. One remained almost silent throughout it, whereas the only way I can explain the other coal miner's behaviour is through describing an

⁷⁷⁶ Hall, "The Spectacle of the 'Other'," 258.

⁷⁷⁷ Hall, "The Spectacle of the 'Other'," 258.

⁷⁷⁸ See: Hall, "The Spectacle of the 'Other'," 258.

⁷⁷⁹ Hall, "The Spectacle of the 'Other'," 258.

⁷⁸⁰ See: Hall, "The Spectacle of the 'Other'," 259-269.

⁷⁸¹ The exhibition was the final product of the public engagement with research project "The Image Speaks." The Image Speaks is a collaborative project between the photographer Andy Brown and PhD students from the University of Sheffield's Faculty of Arts and Humanities. Over a number of weeks, the PhD students work alongside Brown to compose visual representations of their research. I participated in the Image Speaks project in its first year in 2014. Brown and I worked with three of the coal miners participating in my research project to develop a photograph that sought to represent not only my research project as a whole, but also, more specifically, the way in which the coal miners had contextually read Jeremiah 18:1-12. To do this, we travelled to the site of Oakthorpe colliery in North West Leicestershire. After its closure in 1990 this once prominent colliery has been transformed into a picnic area. We therefore sought to create an image that captured the disappearing state of coal mining in Britain. More information on the project can be found here: The University of Sheffield, "The Image Speaks," 2016, <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/theimagespeaks>.

interaction I overheard between him and his wife. The wife told her husband not to go "full Neanderthal" during the event. When he began to protest, she shushed him by saying "but you always do it in places like this." The wife's worry that her husband would go "full Neanderthal" was something that I had heard before and it refers to the fact that he will purposefully act like a "thick miner" because of his anxieties about his class and education. To manage these anxieties, he therefore purposefully over-exaggerates them so that he becomes a violent caricature of his class.

By doing this, he is not then being judged for his real working-class behaviour since this has remained hidden, but instead he is judged for his *performance* of working-class behaviour. In his mind, it is he who has the upper-hand as he is in control of how his class is performed and thus perceived by others. By being a "Neanderthal" he is able to subvert his feelings of being looked down upon by now looking down upon those he is interacting with, as they are being fooled into believing that this is how working-class people act.

Such behaviour, however, does nothing for the reputation of either coal miners or the working-class, as those being fooled do not know they are being fooled and thus think that this is the way working-class people or coal miners act. Therefore, whilst the coal miner may internally perceive this interaction as a victorious one, in the long-run, such actions merely deepen the stigma of being working-class. This behaviour is described by Hall as "adopting a sort of caricature-in-reverse"⁷⁸² and that it is done in an attempt to subvert the power relations at play in the given situation. Such behaviour results in individuals and groups being "trapped by the stereotype."⁷⁸³

During the CBS sessions, similar anxieties also came to the fore as the coal miners kept asking "is this right" in relation to their interpretations. However, after much persuading, they eventually stopped asking "is this right?" and started asking "is this interesting?". This switch in questioning demonstrates how their thinking about the CBS sessions shifted from worrying about whether their interpretations conformed with how biblical scholars (who were invariably identified as being at

⁷⁸² Hall, "The Spectacle of the 'Other'," 263.

⁷⁸³ Hall, "The Spectacle of the 'Other'," 263.

the very least middle-class) have previously read the text, to whether or not biblical scholars would find them interesting.

Money and Class

One glaring omission from the coal miners' identification as and definition of working-class was the issue of money. Whilst the contextual definition of working-class I have described largely fits with Savage's capital-based definition of the traditional working-class category, a discrepancy appears when we consider the coal miners' economic capital in comparison to the economic capital of the traditional working-class category as identified by Savage. For example, when we consider a modern coal miner's potential earnings, which can reach upwards of £100k per-annum when we include overtime and bonuses, the latter of which are particularly pertinent for those working on the coalface as they receive bonuses directly relating to coal production, we see that this group's economic capital places them somewhere in-between Savage's "elite" and "established middle class" who have an average income of between £47k and £89k per-annum.⁷⁸⁴ In addition to this, the men that participated in this study all own what can be considered luxury goods, as many drive high-end cars such as Mercedes, Audis, Jaguars, and BMWs. Being aware of this information, I was prompted to consider the issue of wealth in relation to their class identification more closely and to examine whether the coal miners' definition and identification as working-class is challenged by the wages they earn.

Based upon the evidence I have thus far presented, we can speculate that the cultural and social capitals of coal miners are more significant identifiers of their class than their economic capital, the high levels of which might exclude them from being considered working-class. Hoggart similarly reflects on such tensions when he explains that "[o]ne cannot firmly distinguish workers from others by the amount of

⁷⁸⁴ Savage, et al., "A New Model of Social Class?" 230 and 233-234 and *Social Class in the 21st Century*, 167.

money earned, since there are enormous variations in wages among working-class people; and most steel-workers, for instance, are plainly working-class though some earn more than many teachers who are not."⁷⁸⁵ Being "plainly working-class" regardless of earnings is certainly true of the coal miners in my study. In addition to this, the age of the participants (between 50-80) also identifies them as part of a generation that would have been directly influenced by the now "out of date" understandings of class, thus we must be conscious and respectful of the fact that they are operating within and are a product of this particular timeframe. However, this does not negate the fact that there are tensions in the coal miners' identification as working-class. Class is thus ambiguous for this group and is not straightforward.

Race and Class

One aspect of the participant's construction of class that I have been unable to assess in this project is that of race. This is because any discussion of race was absent from the data collected. Any attempt to construct an analysis of race in this context would therefore be too tenuous. However, to just dismiss the issue of race would also be remiss. In order to theorise why the issue of race was so absent, I have drawn upon the insight a lifetime of experience of this context provides me with. I believe that the reason for the absence of any racial discourse in this project is because the men from this context rarely experience race as an issue, and are thus unaware of race.

The reasons for this lack of awareness, consideration, or acknowledgment of the issue of race is twofold: 1. The environment in which they were born, raised, and now live and work is racially uniform as being white is the norm; 2. The concept of "white privilege," which I am defining as being "a system of advantage based on race... [which] has been compared... to an invisible, weightless knapsack of assets

⁷⁸⁵ Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy*, 9.

and resources"⁷⁸⁶ that a white person is given upon their birth, is unheard of because of limited racial diversity and education. Thus, in institutions, like schools, that "create and enforce racial meanings,"⁷⁸⁷ the lack of direct experience of racial diversity, knowledge of racial diversity and race issues, and acknowledgement of the inherent privilege whiteness provides white individuals with, results in a lack of awareness or ignorance of race and its significance. Such individuals do not therefore see themselves as racial beings, with other factors that they do experience on a day-to-day basis, like class issues, instead taking poll-position in the identity stakes.

This is intensified by their profession, as this too is racially uniform. Whilst I do not have statistics to confirm this, my knowledge of coal miners can. For example, whenever any form of diversity rears its head in this context, it becomes a major topic of discussion (or gossip). Thus, any aspect of a person's gender, religion, sexuality, politics, or general worldview that falls outside the boundaries of what is dictated as "normal" for this context is immediately subject to widespread discussion.⁷⁸⁸ Based upon how readily coal miners discussed their experiences of difference during my research, I can assume that if any of them had ever worked with a non-white coal miner, I would have heard about it. In addition to this, I have never met a non-white coal miner and have never come across any literature or depictions of coal miners in Britain that include non-whites.

What the absence of race in this research highlights, therefore, is that in the areas of Britain that are still racially uniform, white privilege is going unacknowledged and unchecked and that the lack of experience of race is blinding people to the issue of race. I did not even uncover any "privileged ambivalence"⁷⁸⁹

⁷⁸⁶ James A. Banks, *Encyclopedia of Diversity in Education – volume 4* (London: SAGE, 2012), 2300.

⁷⁸⁷ Fine, "Witnessing Whiteness/Gathering Intelligence," 246.

⁷⁸⁸ For example, during the CBS sessions Mr Black regularly reminded me and the group that he once worked with a female coal miner (which was clearly a huge novelty for him). Similarly, during one particularly awkward discussion that took place as part of my fieldwork, another coal miner regaled me with a story about how the daughter of a fellow coal miner left her husband for a woman and how her coming-out as a "rug-muncher" was cause for much mocking and ridicule of her father in the workplace. And finally, how during Daw Mill colliery's last few years, the employment of a number of Polish contractors caused uproar as the introduction of "foreigners" and "Catholics" disrupted the "traditional culture" of the mine.

⁷⁸⁹ Fine, "Witnessing Whiteness/Gathering Intelligence," 245.

towards race, as race was not thought about at all. Closer attention thus needs to be paid to how race is experienced in areas of Britain that are still racially uniform.

Extant Ethnographies of British Coal-Mining Communities, why an Ethnography of Modern Coal-Mining Culture is Needed, and why it may already be too Late for such a Study

The British coal-mining industry has been studied and written about for centuries. Not only has the industry been the subject of innumerable academic studies, but it has also been the inspiration for a number of creative works, from novels, plays, and poetry, to television programmes, films, and artwork. As part of the ethnographic stage of my research, I sought to determine how previous studies have reported on the coal-mining industry, as well as how coal mining has inspired the production of numerous creative works. After much reading, I have determined that the way in which coal mining has thus far been written about can be divided into four categories:

1. Sociological/anthropological studies;
2. Historical studies (both general and local);
3. Nostalgic accounts;
4. Studies focusing upon coal mining and politics.

To make explicit the differences that exist between these four categories, I will now examine each category in turn. As the title suggests, the sociological/anthropological studies category refers to works that can, on the whole, be described as records of qualitative research projects conducted by academics who wish to critically examine the coal-mining industry and coal-mining communities from a variety of theoretical positions. This category, however, can be further divided into two additional subcategories, namely, those that focus upon coal-mining communities during the period when coal mining was at its height and

those that focus upon coal-mining communities once the coal-mining industry began to decline. Norman Dennis, Fernando Henriques, and Clifford Slaughter’s *Coal is Our Life*⁷⁹⁰ is a good example of the former. Such works typically utilise ethnography to examine the various interconnected social, cultural, and economic aspects of a community that is reliant upon the coal-mining industry for its survival. They typically analyse the relationships between the inhabitants of such communities, the leisure and cultural pursuits of community members, the economic stability of the community, and the realities of working in a coal mine and the impact that this has upon the behaviour, attitude, and worldview of coal miners. Such studies are often guided by a distinct theoretical framework. For example, Dennis, Henriques, and Slaughter utilise a Marxist framework as the basis of their study.

The latter subcategory, however, seeks to investigate the social, cultural, and economic state of ex-coal-mining communities that, because of the closure of their local collieries, have entered into an ever-worsening state of decline. The following are key examples of such work: Royce Turner’s *Coal Was Our Life*,⁷⁹¹ Dennis Warwick and Gary Littlejohn’s *Coal, Capital and Culture*,⁷⁹² David Waddington’s *Developing Coalfield Communities* and his co-authored *Split at the Seams?*,⁷⁹³ and Geoffrey N. Bright’s work on education, aspiration, “social

⁷⁹⁰ Norman Dennis, Fernando Henriques, and Clifford Slaughter, *Coal is Our Life: An Analysis of a Yorkshire Mining Community* (London: Tavistock Publications Ltd, 1969).

⁷⁹¹ Royce Turner, *Coal Was Our Life: An Essay on Life in a Yorkshire Former Pit Town* (Sheffield: Sheffield Hallam Press, 2000).

⁷⁹² Dennis Warwick and Gary Littlejohn, *Coal, Capital and Culture: A Sociological Analysis of Mining Communities in West Yorkshire* (London: Routledge, 1992).

⁷⁹³ David Waddington, *Developing Coalfields Communities: Breathing New Life into Warsop Vale* (Bristol: The Policy Press, 2003); David Waddington, Maggie Wykes, and Chas Crichton, *Split at the Seams? Community, Continuity and Change after the 1984–5 Coal Dispute* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1991).

haunting,"⁷⁹⁴ and the future of children living in ex-coal-mining communities.⁷⁹⁵ As the above titles suggest, the studies in this latter subcategory often focus upon the subsequent destruction of a coal-mining town or village and the cohesion of the community that inhabit it in the wake of their local collieries being closed and the coal-mining industry upon which the communities rely ceasing to exist. An examination of the cultural and economic crises that occur in ex-coal-mining communities as a result of high levels of unemployment and poverty, as well as a lack of access to educational and cultural resources are common features of such studies.

Warwick and Littlejohn's work is a typical example as this volume records their ethnographic visits to four different ex-coal-mining towns in West Yorkshire. Warwick and Littlejohn conducted these visits to build an accurate picture of life post-coal mining. Similarly, Waddington's research also seeks to investigate the development of coalfield communities in a post-coal-mining era. The nature of Bright's work is not too dissimilar, however, Bright is specifically concerned with examining the state of, and access to, education in deindustrialised coal-mining communities and the way in which the mass colliery closures of the 1980s is still impacting such communities.

⁷⁹⁴ "Social haunting" is a term developed by Avery F. Gordon to describe the extent to which communities are deeply impacted by violent or traumatic events of the past. See: Avery F. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (Minneapolis: New University of Minnesota Press, 2008). Bright has adopted and developed this term to describe how the many deindustrialised communities of Britain are haunted by the downfall of their once illustrious past. Bright's latest examination of "social haunting" in Britain is still in its data collection phase, but details of his AHRC research project "Opening the 'unclosed space' - Multiplying 'Ghost Labs' as Intergenerational Utopian Practice" can be found here: Manchester Metropolitan University, "Working with communities haunted by the past: Dr Bright and Dr McNicol explore 'social haunting,'" 06 June 2016, <http://www.mmu.ac.uk/news/news-items/4429/>. Bright has also established a tumblr account dedicated to archiving the visual material produced during this project, see: Geoffrey N. Bright, "Working with Social Haunting," 2016, <http://workingwithsocialhaunting.tumblr.com/>.

⁷⁹⁵ See: Geoffrey N. Bright, "'The lady is not returning!': educational precarity and a social haunting in the UK coalfields," *Ethnography and Education - Special Issue: Education and Precarity* 11/2 (2016): 142-157, "A practice of concrete utopia? School disaffection, refusal and the possibility of 'redemptive remembering' in a UK coalfield," *Power and Education* 4/3 (2012): 315-326, "'Sticking together!' Policy activism from within a UK coal-mining community," *Journal of Educational Administration and History Special Issue: Policy Activism* 44/3 (2012): 221-236, "'Off The Model': Resistant spaces, school disaffection and 'aspiration' in a UK coal-mining community," *Children's Geographies* 9/1 (2011): 63-78, "Just doing stuff"? Place, memory and youth educational disaffection in a UK Former coalfield," *International Journal on School Disaffection* 7/1 (2010):44-52.

In some cases, these studies also take the form of follow-up studies. For example, Turner’s volume is a follow-up study of the town that initially featured in Dennis, Henriques, and Slaughter’s *Coal is Our Life*. Turner, forty years later, returned to the town of Featherstone in West Yorkshire (which was called the pseudonym “Ashton” in Dennis, Henriques, and Slaughter’s study) to investigate and record the changing state of coal-mining communities in the wake of the events of the 1980s.

When it comes to historical studies, the works in this category generally focus upon the history of British coal mining from one of the following perspectives: 1. the overall history of coal mining in Britain; 2. the local history of the industry in a specific village or town; 3. a specific notable moment in, or aspect of, the history of the industry; 4. the statistical analysis of coal production throughout the history of the industry; and, 5. the history, location, and geographical make-up of specific coal seams.

Prominent examples of the overall history of coal mining in Britain are Robert Lindsay Galloway’s *A History of Coal Mining in Great Britain*⁷⁹⁶ and *Annals of Coal Mining and the Coal Mining Trade*⁷⁹⁷ and Richard Hayman’s *Coal Mining in Britain*.⁷⁹⁸ Prominent examples of more localised histories of coal mining in Britain are Keith Gilliver’s *Round and Round a Lot More Coal Still Underground*,⁷⁹⁹ Alan R. Griffin’s *Mining in the East Midlands*,⁸⁰⁰ and Colin Owen’s *The Leicestershire and South Derbyshire Coalfield*.⁸⁰¹

Studies in this category often consist almost entirely of oral history accounts of what it was like to be a coal miner, as well as detailed collections of visual materials relating either to life in a flourishing coal-mining community or life during the strikes. They are therefore often akin to illustrated local histories. David Bell, a

⁷⁹⁶ Robert Lindsay Galloway, *A History of Coal Mining in Great Britain* (Memphis: General Books LLC, 2012).

⁷⁹⁷ Robert Lindsay Galloway, *Annals of Coal Mining and the Coal Mining Trade, Volume 1* (London: David and Charles reprints, 1971).

⁷⁹⁸ Richard Hayman, *Coal Mining in Britain* (London: Bloomsbury Shire Library Publications, 2016).

⁷⁹⁹ Keith Gilliver, *Round and Round a Lot More Coal Still Underground: The Collieries of the Eastern Basin of the Leicestershire/Derbyshire Coalfield* (Swadlincote: Gullavain Publishing, 2009).

⁸⁰⁰ Alan R. Griffin, *Mining in the East Midlands, 1550-1947* (London: Frank Cass, 1971).

⁸⁰¹ Colin Owen, *The Leicestershire and South Derbyshire Coalfield: 1200-1900* (Buxton: Moorland Publishing, 1984).

local historian hailing from Ashby-de-la-Zouch who has authored *Memories of the Staffordshire Coalfields*,⁸⁰² *Memories of the Nottinghamshire Coalfields*,⁸⁰³ *Memories of the Derbyshire Coalfields*,⁸⁰⁴ *Memories of the Leicestershire Coalfields*,⁸⁰⁵ and *The Dirty Thirty: Heroes of the Miners' Strike*,⁸⁰⁶ is one of the most significant examples of these more localised studies.

Further examples of such localised studies that rely upon a mixture of oral history accounts of coal mining and visual materials are Brian John Elliott's *Yorkshire Miners*⁸⁰⁷ and *Pits and Pitmen of Barnsley*,⁸⁰⁸ Clive Hardy's *When Coal Was King*,⁸⁰⁹ Ken Wain's *The Coal Mining Industry in Barnsley, Rotherham and Worksop*,⁸¹⁰ Harry Paterson's *Look Back in Anger*,⁸¹¹ and Peter Tuffrey's *South Yorkshire People and Coal*.⁸¹²

An example of a study that focuses upon one particular aspect of the industry's history is Arthur J. McIvor and Ronald Johnston's *Miners Lung*,⁸¹³ which examines the issue of occupational health and safety within the mining industry and the experience of coal miners seeking the legal control of dusty conditions in British collieries. There are, of course, innumerable works that focus upon the Great Strike of 1984–85 that fit in this subcategory, however, as the fourth category focuses upon politics, most of these works are better suited to being listed there instead.

⁸⁰² David Bell, *Memories of the Staffordshire Coalfields* (Berkshire: Countryside Books, 2010).

⁸⁰³ David Bell, *Memories of the Nottinghamshire Coalfields* (Berkshire: Countryside Books, 2008).

⁸⁰⁴ David Bell, *Memories of the Derbyshire Coalfields* (Berkshire: Countryside Books, 2007).

⁸⁰⁵ David Bell, *Memories of the Leicestershire Coalfields* (Berkshire: Countryside Books, 2007).

⁸⁰⁶ David Bell, *The Dirty Thirty: Heroes of the Miners' Strike* (Nottingham: Five Leaves Publishing, 2009).

⁸⁰⁷ Brian John Elliott, *Yorkshire Miners* (Gloucestershire: The History Press, 2012).

⁸⁰⁸ Brian John Elliott, *Pits and Pitmen of Barnsley: A Pictorial Tribute and Celebration of Miners, Their Families and Communities, 1900-2000* (Barnsley: Wharncliffe Books, 2001).

⁸⁰⁹ Clive Hardy, *When Coal Was King* (Derbyshire: The Derbyshire Times, 2010).

⁸¹⁰ Ken Wain, *The Coal Mining Industry in Barnsley, Rotherham and Worksop* (Stroud: Amberley Publishing, 2014).

⁸¹¹ Harry Paterson, *Look Back in Anger: The Miners' Strike in Nottinghamshire 30 Years on* (Nottingham: Five Leaves Publishing, 2014).

⁸¹² Peter Tuffrey, *South Yorkshire People and Coal* (Oxford: Fronthill Media, 2013).

⁸¹³ Arthur J. McIvor and Ronald Johnston, *Miners Lung: A History of Dust Disease in British Coal Mining* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2007).

Examples of studies that focus upon either the history of coal production in Britain or Britain’s many coal seams are Barbara Freese’s *Coal*,⁸¹⁴ which explores the history of coal in Britain and the profound role it plays/played across the globe, and Peter Thorsheim’s *Inventing Pollution*,⁸¹⁵ which examines the role mass coal production and combustion has played in polluting Britain.

Whilst the vast majority of historical accounts are concerned with presenting the history and culture of Britain’s coal-mining industry in an accessible form of reportage, this category also includes creative works, where the history of coal mining is presented in a more creative manner or has been used as the inspiration for creative works such as poetry, plays, short stories, and novels. Tony Curtis’s edited volume *Coal: An Anthology of Mining*,⁸¹⁶ D. H. Lawrence’s *Sons and Lovers*,⁸¹⁷ and Tony Parker’s *Red Hill*⁸¹⁸ are good examples of such works. In addition to such literary works there have also been a number of films produced that seek to creatively explore the history of coal mining in Britain. Most notably, *Billy Elliot*,⁸¹⁹ *Brassed Off*,⁸²⁰ and *Pride*.⁸²¹

The third category consists of nostalgic accounts. Whilst many of the works in this category overlap with those in the historical category, I am listing them separately as they are often more concerned with presenting a biased and overtly sentimental account of the British coal-mining industry. Again, such works often consist of oral history accounts of what it was like to be a coal miner or collections of visual materials depicting life in coal-mining communities. Again, see the work of Bell, Elliott (in particular, *Images of Coalminers: Images of the Past*),⁸²² and Hardy,

⁸¹⁴ Barbara Freese, *Coal: A Human History* (London: Arrow Books, 2005).

⁸¹⁵ Peter Thorsheim, *Inventing Pollution: Coal, Smoke, and Culture in Britain Since 1800* (Ohio, Ohio University Press, 2006).

⁸¹⁶ Tony Curtis, ed., *Coal: An Anthology of Mining* (Bridgend: Poetry Wales, 1997).

⁸¹⁷ D. H. Lawrence, “Sons and Lovers,” in *The Selected Works of D. H. Lawrence, Wordsworth Editions* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 2006), 7-337.

⁸¹⁸ Tony Parker, *Red Hill: A Mining Community* (London: Faber and Faber, 2013).

⁸¹⁹ *Billy Elliott*, Directed by Stephen Daldry, Produced by Greg Brenman, Universal Pictures and Focus Features, 29 September 2000.

⁸²⁰ *Brassed Off*, Directed by Mark Herman, Produced by Steve Abbott, Channel Four Films and Miramax Films, 01 November 2006.

⁸²¹ *Pride*, Directed by Matthew Warchus, Produced by David Livingstone, Pathe, 12 September 2014.

⁸²² Brian John Elliott, *Images of Coalminers: Images of the Past* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Books Ltd., 2015).

as well as Kevin Thompson’s *The Colliers Tale*,⁸²³ Peter Gibbon and David Steyne’s *Thurcroft: A Village and the Miners’ Strike*,⁸²⁴ and Chris Arnot’s *Britain’s Lost Mines*.⁸²⁵

There have also been a number of films produced that are primarily nostalgic in tone. These films make use of archival footage and oral history interviews to reflect upon the history of coal mining and its most notable moments. Bill Morrison’s filmic elegy *The Miners’ Hymns*,⁸²⁶ for example, explores the Great Strike from the perspective of participating coal miners and their families in North East England. Other notable examples include the National Coal Board’s *Portrait of a Miner*⁸²⁷ and the independently produced *The Miners’ Campaign Tapes*⁸²⁸ which comprises of footage shot during the strikes.

And finally, the fourth category focuses upon coal mining and politics. Works in this area primarily focus upon the development of coal-mining unions and their relationship with both coal-mining companies and the British government. One prominent example is R. Page Arnot’s *The Miners: One Union, One Industry*.⁸²⁹ However, most of the works in this area focus specifically upon the 1984–85 Great Strike. Leading examples of this include Francis Beckett’s *Marching to the Fault Line*,⁸³⁰ Jim Coulter, Susan Walker, and Martin Miller’s *A State of Siege*,⁸³¹ Ian MacGregor and Rodney Tyler’s *The Enemies Within*,⁸³² Bernard Jackson’s *The Battle for Orgreave*,⁸³³ Jim Philips’ *Collieries, Communities and the Miners’ Strike in*

⁸²³ Kevin Thompson, *The Colliers Tale: Mining Life in the Early 1900s* (Derby: Reid-Thompson Publishing, 1991).

⁸²⁴ Peter Gibbon and David Steyne, *Thurcroft: A Village and the Miners’ Strike (An Oral History by the People of Thurcroft)* (Nottingham: Spokesman Books, 2014).

⁸²⁵ Chris Arnot, *Britain’s Lost Mines: The Vanished Kingdom of the Men who Carved out the Nation’s Wealth* (London: Aurum Press, 2013).

⁸²⁶ *The Miners’ Hymns*, Directed by Bill Morrison, BFI Video, 20 June 2011.

⁸²⁷ *National Coal Board Collection Volume One: Portrait of a Miner*, BFI Video 28 September 2009.

⁸²⁸ *The Miners’ Campaign Tapes*, Produced by Chris Reeves, BFI Video, 30 November 2009.

⁸²⁹ R. Page Arnot, *The Miners: One Union, One Industry: A History of the National Union of Mineworkers 1939–46* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1979).

⁸³⁰ Francis Beckett, *Marching to the Fault Line: The Miners’ Strike and the Battle for Industrial Britain* (London: Constable, 2009).

⁸³¹ Jim Coulter, Susan Walker, and Martin Miller, *A State of Siege: Politics and Policing of the Coal Fields: The Miners’ Strike, 1984* (London: Canary Press, 1984).

⁸³² Ian MacGegor and Rodney Tyler, *The Enemies Within: The Story of the Miners’ Strike 1984–5* (London: Collins, 1986).

⁸³³ Bernard Jackson, with Tony Wardle, *The Battle for Orgreave* (Brighton: Vanson Wardle Productions, 1986).

Scotland, 1984–85,⁸³⁴ Andrew J. Richards’ *Miners on Strike: Class Solidarity and Division in Britain*,⁸³⁵ Lesley Sutcliffe’s *Let them Eat Coal: The Political Use of Social Security during the Miners’ Strike*,⁸³⁶ Martin Adeney and John Lloyd’s *The Miners’ Strike, 1984–85: Loss Without Limit*,⁸³⁷ Geoffrey Goodman’s *The Miners’ Strike*,⁸³⁸ and the Sunday Times Insight Team’s *Strike: Thatcher, Scargill and the Miners*.⁸³⁹

Whilst these works all focus upon the Great Strike and the relationship between coal miners, coal-mining unions, the government, and British politics, they do not all reach the same conclusions. For example, MacGregor and Tyler’s account focuses upon debunking Arthur Scargill’s reputation as the valiant leader crusading against an unfair system by instead presenting him as a Marxist autocrat and challenging his motivation for leading the strike and the decisions he made that breached union policies or ignored wider public opinion. Seamus Milnes’s *The Enemy Within: The Secret War Against the Miners*,⁸⁴⁰ on the other hand, seeks to expose how a post-strike media campaign was developed to publicly disgrace Scargill. Milnes also asserts that the secret services were also heavily involved in the strikes, often posing as policemen—an allegation that I have heard many times during my ethnographic research. And finally, there are also collective works that seek to examine the miners’ strike from a variety of perspectives. For example, *Digging Deeper: Issues in the Miners’ Strike*⁸⁴¹ is a collection of 17 articles that examine the Great Strike from various angles, including the political strategies implemented before, during, and after the strikes, the role of the police and the courts, and the impact the strikes had on miners and their families. Therefore,

⁸³⁴ Jim Philips, *Collieries, Communities and the Miners’ Strike in Scotland, 1984–85* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014).

⁸³⁵ Andrew J. Richards, *Miners on Strike: Class Solidarity and Division in Britain* (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 1996).

⁸³⁶ Lesley Sutcliffe, *Let them Eat Coal: The Political Use of Social Security during the Miners’ Strike* (London: Canary Press, 1985).

⁸³⁷ Martin Adeney and John Lloyd, *The Miners’ Strike, 1984–85: Loss without Limit* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986).

⁸³⁸ Geoffrey Goodman, *The Miners’ Strike* (London: Pluto Press, 1985).

⁸³⁹ The Sunday Times Insight Team, *Strike: Thatcher, Scargill and the Miners* (London: Coronet Books, 1985).

⁸⁴⁰ Seumas Milnes, *The Enemy Within: The Secret War Against the Miners – 30th Anniversary Edition* (London: Verso Books, 2014).

⁸⁴¹ Huw Beynon, ed., *Digging Deeper: Issues in the Miners’ Strike* (London: Verso Books, 1985).

whilst all the above cited works may focus upon the strikes, they do not do so in the same manner.

Most of the above can be considered a form of retrospective investigative journalism, as they primarily focus upon uncovering, analysing, and critiquing the roles the government, the police force, strike leaders, and the media played during the events of the 1980s. For example, Katy Shaw’s *Mining the Meaning* investigates how the 1980s strikes have been (mis)represented by the media.⁸⁴² In addition to this, they also often contain a great deal of visual material, with much of this consisting of photographs taken during the Great Strike, for example, images of coal miners at picket lines, protesting, and clashing with the police. Similarly, they also make use of archival data, excerpts from the media, and oral history accounts from those involved in the strikes.

Whilst many of the works cited were published shortly after the strikes came to an end, the events of 1984–85 have been repeatedly returned to by scholars at various points over the last three decades. For example, in 2014, Milnes released a 30th anniversary edition of *The Enemy Within*. Similarly, the documentary *Still The Enemy Within*,⁸⁴³ which features unseen archive footage of the Great Strike, as well as in-depth interviews with coal miners and their families, was released on DVD in 2014. The fact that scholars keep returning to what is considered the most devastating example of industrial action in British history demonstrates both the importance of, and the strong public interest in, such events and their long-lasting repercussions. Evidence of this can be seen most recently with the results of the investigation into police misconduct during and after the 1989 Hillsborough disaster where 96 people were killed and 766 were injured at the Hillsborough football stadium in Sheffield, South Yorkshire, owing to overcrowding. One of the results of this investigation has been the call, by both the public and MPs, for a similar investigation into police misconduct at the Battle of Orgreave, a notorious confrontation on 18th June 1984 between police and picketing miners at a

⁸⁴² Katy Shaw, *Mining the Meaning: Cultural Representations of the 1984–5 UK Miners' Strike* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2012).

⁸⁴³ *Still the Enemy Within*, Directed by Owen Gower, Bad Bonobo Productions and Lace DVD, 15 December 2014.

British Steel Corporation coking plant in Orgreave, South Yorkshire.⁸⁴⁴ Whilst this call has gained a great deal of support, it was announced on 13th July 2016 that whilst a report into allegations of police misconduct has been produced, it will not be made public.⁸⁴⁵ Needless to say, this announcement has only increased speculation about police misconduct during the strikes.

Works in this category also focus more generally upon how industrial action has plagued Britain’s coal-mining industry. For example, Janet Atkins, Elaine McCulloch, and Ann Woolgrove’s *The South Derbyshire Miners Lock-Out 1867–1868*⁸⁴⁶ looks at one specific period of industrial action that occurred in South Derbyshire in the nineteenth century and Roy Gregory’s *The Miners and British Politics, 1906–1914*⁸⁴⁷ looks at the changing state of British politics in the run up to WWI and the beginning of what would be the century-long allegiance between the Labour Party and coal-mining unions. And finally, works such as Orwell’s *Road to Wigan Pier* focus upon the harsh realities and living conditions of industrial communities to make a wider political comment on British society.

The works listed above can also be divided into two further categories of “academic” and “local,” with the former usually consisting of an analytically framed, critical, in-depth investigation of a particular aspect of the coal-mining industry, and the latter usually consisting of a collection of facts, oral histories, and visual material that together record and preserve the overall legacy of Britain’s coal-mining industry. Good examples of the latter include the work of Beryl Greening (a local South Derbyshire woman with a passion for preserving coal-mining

⁸⁴⁴ See: Ken Capstick, “The lies binding Hillsborough to the battle of Orgreave,” *The Guardian*, May 05 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/may/05/lies-bind-hillsborough-battle-orgreave> and Helen Pidd, “MPs write to Theresa May to demand inquiry into Orgreave policing,” *The Guardian*, 25 May 2016, <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/may/25/mps-write-to-theresa-may-to-demand-inquiry-into-battle-of-orgreave>.

⁸⁴⁵ See: ITV News, 13 July 2016, “Uncensored report into Battle of Orgreave will not be published,” <http://www.itv.com/news/tyne-tees/2016-07-13/uncensored-report-into-battle-of-orgreave-will-not-be-published/> and BBC News, 13 July 2016, “Orgreave: No inquiry move 'until after Hillsborough investigation,” <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-south-yorkshire-36777547>.

⁸⁴⁶ Janet Atkins, Elaine McCulloch, and Ann Woolgrove, *The South Derbyshire Miners Lock-Out 1867–1868* (Swadlincote: Magic Attic Archives, 2010).

⁸⁴⁷ Roy Gregory, *The Miners and British Politics, 1906–1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968).

heritage),⁸⁴⁸ Bell (whose works centre upon the areas of South Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Staffordshire, and Nottinghamshire), and Gilliver (a local historian from the South Derbyshire area and a prominent member of the South Derbyshire Local History Forum). Many of these works are either self-published or published in small runs by independent, local publishing houses.

If we consider these four categories, it is evident that there is a distinct gap in the study of Britain’s coal-mining industry, as no studies currently exist that focus upon what it is like to still be a coal miner in Britain and how life as a coal miner is experienced by men who are still employed as coal miners. The focus of extant studies has thus far been upon coal-mining communities of the past or the history and nostalgia of coal mining. This substantial fissure of extant knowledge made it evident that I needed to conduct my own ethnographic study in order to accurately assess and understand what it is like to still be a coal miner in modern Britain.

The need to conduct my own ethnographic study was heightened by the fact that during the course of my PhD, deep-coal coal mining in Britain ended. It is therefore of great concern to me that the ethnographic analysis contained within this thesis, which focuses upon a group of the last few remaining coal miners in Britain, may quite literally be the only account of the lives and experiences of men still employed as coal miners in twenty-first century Britain. Thus, the fissure of knowledge in the field of coal-mining studies may never be filled.

Drawing the Boundaries of my Research Field

The field in which I conducted my research in fact comprised of multiple fields, the first of which can be described as “geographical” as it refers to the geographical boundaries of the physical location of my research. Geographically, my research

⁸⁴⁸ Copies of Greening’s unpublished or locally published research into coal mining in the South Derbyshire area can be found the Magic Attic Archives in Swadlincote. For example: Beryl Greening, *A Short History of “The Streets” in Castle Gresley, Derbyshire* (Swadlincote: Magic Attic Archives, 2003), “A Study of the South Derbyshire Coalfield” (unpublished essay, Southlands College, 1964).

field can be defined as the villages and towns that come together to form the South Derbyshire coalfield, which is separated from the Leicestershire coalfield by a geographical fault known as the "Boothorpe Fault." This fault, however, does not occur in-line with the county boundaries of South Derbyshire and North West Leicestershire so whilst some collieries may technically be in North West Leicestershire (such as Measham, Moira, Rawdon, Marquis, and Donisthorpe), they are still defined as South Derbyshire collieries as they work the South Derbyshire side of the fault.⁸⁴⁹

Two hand-drawn maps can be found in Appendices 4 and 5 that illustrate the geographical boundaries of my field.⁸⁵⁰ The first map is of the towns and villages that form the South Derbyshire coalfield. The second map shows the locations of the many collieries that were established on the South Derbyshire coalfield between 1800 and 1991 when Donisthorpe colliery, the last working deep-coal colliery in this area, was closed.

On the first map, the four areas highlighted in yellow are those villages and towns technically within the boundaries of North West Leicestershire and the three areas highlighted in pink are the villages where my study was primarily focused and where all the coal miners that participated in this project live.

The second set of boundaries of my research field can be described as “cultural/vocational” as I sought to study the lived and embodied experiences of modern South Derbyshire coal miners. The third boundaries of my research field can be described as “methodological/ideological” as I sought to conduct my research using the academic practices of ethnography and CBS under the auspices of the discipline of Biblical Studies. The field in which my research took place was at the point where these three boundaries converged.

⁸⁴⁹ See: Bell, *Memories of the Derbyshire Coalfields*, 7-9.

⁸⁵⁰ As I have drawn these maps, they should not be considered 100% accurate, but instead merely illustrative of the area where I was conducting my field research. I chose to draw my own maps as I only needed them for supplementary illustrative purposes and because of the complicated copyright restrictions attached to published maps.

My Time in the Field: A Record of the Methods and Techniques used to Collect Data

Recruiting and Sampling

Even before the unexpected closure of Daw Mill, I knew that it would be highly unlikely that I would be able to conduct my research in the manner I wished. For example, the ideal scenario would have been to go into the mine to observe and experience a typical working shift. However, because of strict health and safety regulations this was never going to be possible. Knowing this, I planned my research around the next best option, which was to spend time at the colliery on the surface and to engage with the men employed there in the above ground areas, such as in the offices and canteen. However, with the closure of Daw Mill, I was also denied this option so I had to rethink my research and recruitment plans.

Because of my personal connection to the industry, I was able to call upon a number of “gate-keepers,” many of whom were family friends or men my father had worked closely with, that I could ask to contribute to my research or to put me in touch with others that would. The group of men that I contacted in this manner became my “key” informants. A tabulation of these informants and the way in which they contributed to my research can be found in Appendix 6.

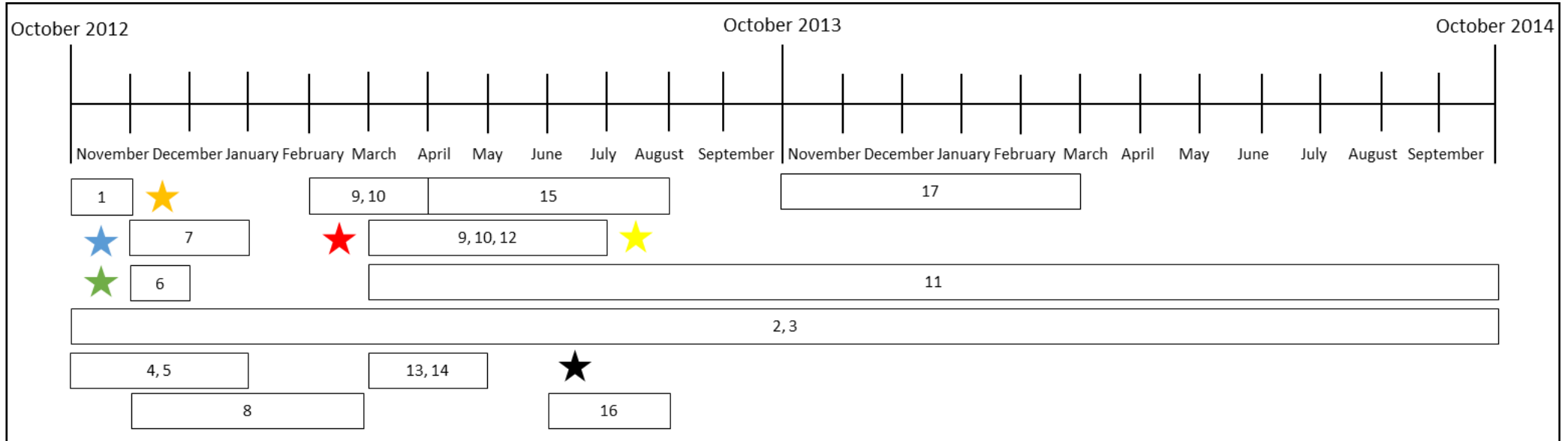
My “key” informants were therefore either recruited directly by me via telephone, text message, email, or face-to-face, or they contacted me because they had heard about my research via word of mouth from other participants. This group of men gradually snowballed, with new participants being acquired in an opportunistic manner.

In addition to these “key” informants, I also recruited “incidental” or “general” informants. These informants were recruited in an *ad hoc* manner when out in the field. I have chosen to refer to these men in groups, rather than as

individuals, as many of their contributions were gathered on an informal basis and often in a group setting. A tabulation of these more general informants and how they participated in my research can be found in Appendix 7. Appendices 6 and 7 therefore detail how every man who participated in this project actually contributed data, which ranged from completing a single questionnaire about their life as coal miner, to taking part in the lengthier CBS programme.

Again, these men were recruited in a snowballing, opportunistic manner. The level to which I already knew each coal miner did not influence the degree to which they participated in my project. For example, I knew Mr G just as well as Mr A and Mr B, yet Mr G did not wish to participate beyond the completion of questionnaires. Similarly, I did not know Mr J or Mr K at all, yet Mr J chose to submit a 16-page memoir and Mr K to submit photographs for the photographic essay.

A Timeline of my Ethnographic Research



For the key to this timeline, as well as for a detailed explanation of the methods used during this stage of my research, see Appendix 8.

Coal Mining in South Derbyshire⁸⁵¹

Records indicate that coal mining has existed in South Derbyshire since as early as 1294. For example, archival records of a land agreement between a group of wealthy local landowners makes note of the vast mineral deposits to be found in the town of Swadlincote,⁸⁵² highlighting the important role coal and mineral wealth played in the area.

However, it was not until the nineteenth century that coal mining began to play a more significant role in the area. For example, a great number of collieries were sunk within short succession of one another in the area, with the largest collieries being Granville (1823), Church Gresley (1829), Stanton (1854), Bretby (1855), Gresley Wood (1856), Cadley Hill (1861), Netherseal (1872), Coton Park and Linton Colliery (1875).⁸⁵³ In addition to these larger collieries, there were also many smaller ones that exploited the shallower coal seams in the area.⁸⁵⁴

However, by 1982, following the national decline of the industry, there were only four coal mines left working the South Derbyshire coalfield.⁸⁵⁵ Despite this, coal mining in South Derbyshire survived the strikes of 1984–85. The Great Strike of the 1980s was experienced uniquely by South Derbyshire coal miners as they were some of the only coal miners in the country to vote against strike action. Coal miners in South Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire chose to oppose the decision of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) and instead formed the Union of Democratic Mineworkers (UDM).

⁸⁵¹ As this research is concerned with South Derbyshire coal miners, it is pertinent that my account of the history of coal mining in Britain focuses upon the history of coal mining in this area alone.

⁸⁵² South Derbyshire District Council, "A brief history of coal mining in South Derbyshire," date unknown, http://www.south-derbys.gov.uk/leisure_culture_and_tourism/local_history_and_heritage/history_of_coal_mining_in_South_Derbyshire/default.asp.

⁸⁵³ South Derbyshire District Council, "A brief history of coal mining in South Derbyshire."

⁸⁵⁴ South Derbyshire District Council, "A brief history of coal mining in South Derbyshire."

⁸⁵⁵ South Derbyshire District Council, "A brief history of coal mining in South Derbyshire."

The events of the 1980s are not, therefore, a direct focus of this research project.⁸⁵⁶ As one coal miner reminded me:

This area, however, voted against the strike, so the strikes didn’t really effect people in this area, it was as though we were in our own little bubble, an ignorance bubble and it was only affecting the rest of the country. People in this area believed that they would be safe as up until this point no pits had closed in this area and there was a good coal seam, it always seemed to be elsewhere, so we believed we had a future.

It is therefore essential to recognise that the Great Strike did not affect all coal miners equally and that the decision to strike or not to strike was not only divisive, but also caused hostility. For example, many of the coal miners participating in my research spoke emotionally about memories of Northern coal miners picketing South Derbyshire collieries and the conflicted feelings they felt when crossing the picket line. In addition to this, when Daw Mill colliery’s sudden closure was announced, a plethora of vicious sentiments—such as “UDM scum finally getting their comeuppance” and “the scabs are finally getting what they deserve”—were spewed across the internet, on Facebook, coal-mining forums, and newspaper comment sections by coal miners still angry about the 1980s.

It was therefore not until 1990, with the closure of Donisthorpe colliery, that deep-coal coal mining came to an end in the area.⁸⁵⁷ This resulted in the vast majority of coal miners from the area becoming something akin to itinerant workers, with each man moving further afield and from colliery to colliery to find work.

In order to demonstrate just how saturated South Derbyshire once was with coal mining, I will examine a series of data sets that directly illustrate this reality, the first of which is the 1861 census data for Church Gresley (section “O” on map one in Appendix 4). To demonstrate how many coal miners lived in Church Gresley at this time, I compiled a list of all the individuals on this census that listed “coal miner” as their profession. As this list is considerably long, I will instead consider a

⁸⁵⁶ This is primarily because my research is concerned with the lives of coal miners today.

⁸⁵⁷ Bell, *Memories of the Derbyshire Coalfields*, 11.

small sample, which can be found in Appendix 9. This sample focuses on the street "Coppice Side." On this street, 34 residents listed themselves as "coal miner" or "employed at colliery," with another two men listing themselves as "coal higgler".⁸⁵⁸ Of the 34 men, 17 also shared a surname with one of the other men listed. We can assume that they either shared a house with the person with the same name or that they were related to one another. Photographs taken in the early 1900s of "Top Row" (a series of terraced houses built right on the doorstep of Church Gresley colliery) and "Stone Row" and "Rawdon Terrace" (another series of terraced houses built near the collieries in Moira) visually demonstrate the close proximity of South Derbyshire coal miners' homes to their employing collieries. Together, this data demonstrates just how many men were employed by the coal-mining industry in South Derbyshire, how geographically close coal miners were to their employing colliery, and how visible coal mining was in the local community.⁸⁵⁹

For those South Derbyshire men still employed as coal miners in twenty-first century Britain, this reality of living right next door to one's colleagues and employing colliery has long gone. This is the cause of great sadness for such men. For example, one recently redundant South Derbyshire coal miner explained:

It's sad really as now you can't go out with your work friends in an evening, you used to be able to go down the pub in the evening with each other but now because you work with people who can live up to 80 miles apart you can't meet them like this, it's only when there is a big organised event, like a wedding, that you can all get together and have a drink, gone are the days of popping down your local pub with the lads for a pint, a lot has changed.

In order to assess the changing nature of being employed as a coal miner for South Derbyshire coal miners, I needed to be able to compare this historic data with similar contemporary data. To do this, I liaised with Daw Mill colliery's HR manager to gain the data necessary to make such assessments. As a result of this, I was granted access to the postcodes of all full-time coal miners employed at the

⁸⁵⁸ A "coal higgler" is a person that worked for the colliery distributing coal to the local area's residents.

⁸⁵⁹ I gained access to these photographs via the Magic Attic Archives, Swadlincote and the SDMPG.

colliery.⁸⁶⁰ I was then able to use this data to determine the average commute of all coal miners employed at the colliery and how far away each coal miner now lived from his employing colliery.⁸⁶¹ Thus I was able to produce a data set that I could contrast with the census data and that would numerically evidence the above statement regarding the changing nature of what it is like to be a coal miner today. A tabulation of the statistics derived from this data can be found in Appendix 10.

The average commute is a distance of 32.87 miles, taking on average 1 hour and 9 minutes. The furthest commuter, however, travels an enormous 228 miles to work, although this coal miner stays near his place of work during the week and then travels home on the weekends. Furthermore, of the 528 full-time employed coal miners, 349 (66%) live under 50 miles away from their employing colliery, with 179 (34%) living 51 miles or over from their place of work. Most telling is the fact that now only 58 of the 528 coal miners live on the same street as another coal miner and of those 58, 52 have only one other coal miner on their street and 6 have two other coal miners on their street. However, as I only received postcode data, it may be that the coal miners in fact live in the same house as another coal miner. 470 coal miners are thus the only coal miner on their street. To supplement this data, I distributed a questionnaire about commuting to a small number of South Derbyshire coal miners. A tabulation of the data collected can be found in Appendix 11.

This data demonstrates that these coal miners have had to cope with the transition from being one of many coal miners in their local area to being almost the only one, who then has to commute long distances to work. For instance, Mr A's responses demonstrate that although he has lived in the same village his entire working career, to maintain his employment as a coal miner he has had to move from one colliery to another, with each colliery being in a different county. For

⁸⁶⁰ I would like to clarify that I was only granted access to the postcodes of employees and that I was not given any names or addresses. Similarly, access was granted to this data on the grounds that I only use a summary of the statistics derived from the postcodes and not the postcodes themselves within this thesis, therefore ensuring that all personal data is kept secure and private. This is exactly what I have done.

⁸⁶¹ With the aid of UK Coal I was therefore relieved of the pressure of having to survey all coal miners at Daw Mill colliery for this data, a task which would have then been impossible to complete once it had closed.

example, Rawdon colliery was situated in Moira in South Derbyshire (around a 10-mile commute), Asfordby was based in Melton Mowbray in Leicestershire (around a 40-mile commute), and finally, Daw Mill colliery which was based in the village of Arley in Warwickshire (around a 26-mile commute).

Similarly, it is also clear that Mr A only moved collieries once his employing colliery had closed (as Rawdon closed in 1990 and Asfordby closed in 1997). In fact, the same can be said of five of the other six coal miners that formed this sample. Mr G was the only coal miner to have left coal mining before his colliery closed; Mr B and Mr D also left Rawdon in 1989, with Mr D then leaving Lea Hall colliery in 1990 just before it officially closed in 1991. Mr D, along with Mr C, then also left Asfordby in 1997 upon its closure. Mr E left Measham colliery in 1984, just before its closure in 1986, and then Cadley Hill circa 1986, which closed in 1988. Similarly, Donisthorpe colliery closed in 1991 and Mr C left circa 1989, and finally Mr A, Mr C, and Mr F were all made redundant when Daw Mill colliery was closed in 2013.

By comparing the historic census data, the statistics derived from the postcode data,⁸⁶² and the results of the employment history questionnaire, we can conclude that those men who are located in South Derbyshire and are still employed as coal miners have experienced not only the demise of their employing industry (on both a local and national scale), but also the destruction of the community that developed as a product of this industry, as well as the sense of shared culture that evolved with it. Thus, for these men, the culture that once surrounded them and saturated their lives shrunk to be solely located within the boundaries of the coal mine.

However, with the recent closure of Britain's final four deep-coal collieries, even this has been taken from them. These men have thus had to witness their once widespread and vibrant culture's final transition into the memory books of history. The removal of any centralised location where their culture could be preserved and legitimated has thus resulted in both their collective and individual identities coming under threat. Such men are now finding themselves islands of coal-mining culture, afloat in a world that not only does not understand them, but

⁸⁶² As well as considering the fact that only 50 of the postcodes were South Derbyshire ones.

does not have room for them. The cultural isolation coal miners are now experiencing was palpable during my fieldwork, as I was regularly confronted with mournful, dejected, and forlorn statements of "other people don't understand" or "they just don't get us." What follows will thus be a critical examination of what it is like to be a coal miner during such perilous times, with specific focus upon the experiences of South Derbyshire coal miners.

Whilst my findings should be best understood as a case-study, given the fact that coal mining has now ceased to exist across the entirety of Britain and that all remaining British coal miners have also been made redundant, much of what I have uncovered may well be relevant for, and demonstrative of, the experiences of all contemporary British coal miners.

Three Key Findings:

My ethnographic fieldwork has enabled me to make the following three principal conclusions about contemporary South Derbyshire coal miners: 1. That their collective and individual identities are defined by their employment as coal miners; 2. That a powerful "Us versus Them" mentality guides their worldview; 3. That mass involuntary redundancy is experienced as a trauma for these men. These three findings appeared repeatedly and most dominantly during both my ethnographic research and the CBS programme. In addition, as these themes played dominant roles in the coal miners' contextual readings, it is essential that these phenomena are thoroughly examined and understood if we are to stand any chance of understanding such readings. I will now unpack each of these observations in their own subsections.

“Veins and Seams”: Identity through Vocation

The title given to this set of findings purposefully seeks to blur the boundaries between where the coal miner ends and the coal mine begins. It has been chosen to illustrate the notion that for coal miners, coal and blood cannot be separated. Coal finds its way into the blood of coal miners, just as the blood of coal miners finds its way into coal. This powerful metaphor was a recurring trope not only in my ethnographic research and the concluding CBS programme, but also in many of the extant studies of coal mining previously cited. For example, in Lawrence’s *Sons and Lovers*, which focuses upon the lives of the coal-mining family, the Morels, Lawrence describes the body of the protagonist’s father, Walter Morel, as he dries himself after washing in the scullery upon returning home from his work as a coal miner:

He still had a wonderfully young body, muscular, without any fat. His skin was smooth and clear. It might have been the body of a man of twenty-eight, except that there were, perhaps, too many blue scars, like tattoo-marks, where the coal-dust remained under the skin, and that his chest was too hairy.⁸⁶³

Here, Lawrence poignantly illustrates the reality that the vocation of coal mining quite literally gets under the skin of coal miners and enters into their blood. Such a description resonates particularly strongly with my own experience of coal miners, as all the coal miners I know bear the tell-tale blue scars of coal mining on their hands, arms, legs, and faces.

The accuracy of Lawrence’s observation of the inseparable connection that occurs between coal miners and the coal mine through the creation of blue scars was confirmed during my own study. For example, not only could I physically see the blue scars of the coal miners that participated in my study, but they were also

⁸⁶³ Lawrence, “Sons and Lovers,” 163.

repeatedly made reference to during our discussions. For example, it was commonly stated that “the pit has left its mark on me”⁸⁶⁴ or that “we’ve all got miner’s tattoos.” One retired coal miner even joked, “I’ve got a piece of the pit and the pit’s got a piece of me!”, after which he pointed to a blue scar and then made a thumbs-up sign with a hand missing a thumb. In addition to this, the marks’ importance to the coal miners was made evident by the repeated moniker “blue medals”.

Whilst such comments were often made in jest, the juxtaposition of their humour with the violence that causes the scars worked to emphasise their cultural significance. Such scars occur when man and earth clash, the final outcome of which is the irreversible merger of the two. They are thus a reminder of the fragility of the human body and the power of the earth.⁸⁶⁵

As a result, coal mining hugely impacts the health and bodies of coal miners. For example, one of the reasons Mr Black chose not to move on to another colliery upon his redundancy was the impact it was having upon his health. The experience of ill-health because of a lifetime mining was similarly reiterated by almost all the coal miners I spoke with during my research. For example, a large variety of health issues were mentioned, such as, arthritis, vibration white finger, back and neck problems, blue-scars, and breathing and skin issues.⁸⁶⁶

The body, for coal miners, therefore evidences the deep connection between vocation and identity and the role the culture of coal mining plays in the construction, legitimisation, and preservation of their identity. This also encompasses their experience and understanding of gender, specifically

⁸⁶⁴ This statement’s most poignant appearance was during the Revelation CBS session, as the section of Revelation we read included references to the “mark of the beast,” thus the coal miners drew connections between “the mark of the beast” and their blue scars.

⁸⁶⁵ I reflect specifically upon the relationship between coal miners and the Earth in the following article: Tiffany Webster, “‘A Miner Knows Better Than Anybody You Have Little Power Over Mother Nature’: Exploring Genesis 1:26–31 and the Concepts of Control and Power with South Derbyshire Coal Miners,” *Journal of the Bible and its Reception* 2/2 (2015): 145–174.

⁸⁶⁶ In hindsight, biblical passages focusing on the body would have been an extremely thought-provoking theme to include in the CBS programme.

masculinity, as this is also constructed and performed in accordance with/to coal-mining.⁸⁶⁷

Because of the vast amount of time a coal miner spends underground surrounded by men who share the same embodied characteristics, both his body and his characteristics become shaped in their entirety by his vocation. Thus, the culture of coal mining becomes a coal-mining identity, which is then legitimised, reinforced, and re-inscribed every time a coal miner enters into the mine and interacts with his fellow coal miners. Over the many years of this happening on an almost daily basis (and for almost all of the men in my study, we are talking about at least three decades), these characteristics become so ingrained and embedded that they then inevitably spill over into the personal lives of coal miners, thus meaning that coal mining saturates every aspect of their lives and dominates, more than any other factor, their worldview. It is therefore common for coal miners to assert that coal mining is/was “not just a job, it was a way of life.”⁸⁶⁸

The collective experience of the realities of a life down the mine—the skilled labour, the long hours,⁸⁶⁹ the danger, the dark, the camaraderie, the humour—play the most powerful role in the formation of a strong, unchallengeable identity whereby the man comes to embody the job. Every single coal miner I have spoken to categorically states that it is the “men” that make coal mining and that they miss this the most when in the outside world. The following three statements made by participants in this study are demonstrative of this:

⁸⁶⁷ Unfortunately, I am unable to reflect upon this topic any further here, but I have been able to consider it in depth in the following article: Webster, “A Miner Knows Better Than Anybody You Have Little Power Over Mother Nature.”

⁸⁶⁸ Bell, *Memories of the Derbyshire Coalfields*, 41.

⁸⁶⁹ For example, the average shift pattern and working hours of a coal miner also intensifies how saturated their life is with coal mining. An average British coal miner works an eight-hour shift, with up to an additional two hours for commuting to-and-from the coal mine, something which is often done with work colleagues in a car-share arrangement. The vast majority of coal miners work a shift pattern that rotates weekly from “mornings” (usually 5am until 2pm), “afternoons” (usually 12pm to 8pm), and “nights” (7pm to 3am), with additional shifts known as “twilights”. In addition to this, many coal miners stay after their shift in a colliery’s social area (for example, the canteen) to have a meal or to spend time with their work friends. It is also common for coal miners to spend longer underground than their shift dictates owing to the need to meet with the members of the next shift to pass on any details with regard to the events of the day. Many coal miners also have the opportunity to work overtime on weekends or holidays. We must also remember that when at work, these men do not have access to mobile telephones, computers, the Internet, or even toilets. They are thus totally disconnected from the wider world.

The people you meet and the camaraderie between the men is second to none, even though it was a hard job you'd still find something to laugh about, you'd never want to change it, the men are what make it, you'd get through good times and bad times together.

On the day I went for my interview to be a miner, at age 16, I met someone who was also being interviewed. We started together as naïve youngsters and supported each other. We then transferred together to another mine in 1990 and although neither of us now works in the mining industry, we have remained good friends, which is now 30 years down the line. We were bonded together through our experience over the years within the mine.

On one fateful shift down the pit I had the phone-call nobody wants, my wife told me our daughter had died. The support of the men on that day and in the following weeks and months was amazing and is one of the reason it makes you proud to be a miner.

When visiting the SDMPG I was able to observe this connection between vocation and identity for coal miners; one member of the group had made it his duty to maintain and preserve the flame safety lamps that they had collected and had even created his own “lamp-room” in which he worked on the lamps. This is significant as each coal mine also has a lamp-room where skilled individuals were employed to maintain the various lamps and self-rescuers that all coal miners carry. When he was employed as a coal miner, this gentleman worked in the lamp-room maintaining such things. His connection to the lamps, his role as their maintainer, restorer, and protector, and the proud and knowledgeable way in which he described his lamps demonstrates the inseparable connection with who he is and the job he performed.

The connection between vocation, identity, and collectivity is an interpenetrating cyclical one, with each aspect feeding into, shaping, and then being shaped by the other two. The vocation enters the blood just as the coal-dust does and becomes a part of everything that a coal miner is. I am not alone in recognising the saturating effect coal mining has upon the culture and identity of the men that it employs as it features in almost all sociological, historical, or creative works on coal mining in Britain. For example, many of the chapter headings

in Bell's various nostalgic accounts of coal mining in Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire, and Staffordshire demonstrate this.⁸⁷⁰ We can thus infer that the world underground is distinctly different from life on the surface.

In finalising my explanation of the connection between vocation and identity for coal miners, I would like to return to the character of Walter Morel. When we consider Graham Holderness's *Who's Who of D. H. Lawrence*, the opening line that describes the character of Walter Morel is "A Collier...".⁸⁷¹ By listing his profession first, it is as though Holderness is alert to the fact that Morel's vocation as a coal miner pre-empts and pervades every other aspect of his character: his thoughts, his feelings, his language, his interactions with others all are undeniably affected by his vocation as a coal miner. Ronald Granofsky even goes as far as to suggest that Morel's name is also indicative of his profession. For example, Granofsky notes that Morel's name "is evocative of the mouldy fungus that thrives in the darkness and dirt."⁸⁷² Similarly, when Granofsky uses Mary Douglas's explanation of the function of dirt to interrogate the relationship between Morel and his wife, it becomes clear that whilst the rest of us perceive dirt as being indicative of disorder,⁸⁷³ coal miners, like Morel, in fact perceive dirt as thoroughly orderly as it is a "function of their livelihood."⁸⁷⁴

Thus, when reading their contextual biblical interpretations, we must remember that coal mining is who these men are.

⁸⁷⁰ See: David Bell, "'Going Into Another World'," in *Memories of the Derbyshire Coalfields*, David Bell (Berkshire: Countryside Books, 2007), 25-39, "'Not Just A Job," in *Memories of the Derbyshire Coalfields*, David Bell (Berkshire: Countryside Books, 2007), 40-48, "'I Worked With This Character...'" in *Memories of the Staffordshire Coalfields*, David Bell (Berkshire: Countryside Books, 2010), 104-112, and "The End of an Era," in *Memories of the Derbyshire Coalfields*, David Bell (Berkshire: Countryside Books, 2007), 116-122.

⁸⁷¹ Graham Holderness, "Walter Morel," in *Who's Who in D. H. Lawrence*, Graham Holderness (New York: Taplinger, 1976), 88-89 (88).

⁸⁷² Ronald Granofsky, "'His Father's Dirty Digging': Recuperating the Masculine in D. H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*," *Modern Fiction Studies* 55/2 (2009):242-264, (248).

⁸⁷³ Granofsky, "'His Father's Dirty Digging,'" 248.

⁸⁷⁴ Granofsky, "'His Father's Dirty Digging,'" 247.

An "Us versus Them" Mentality, Collectivity, Unity, and being a Monolithic Group

The presence of an "Us versus Them" mentality in coal-mining culture is impossible to avoid. This mentality is a product of the volatile relationship that has long existed between coal miners and their employers, as well as between the coal-mining industry and the British government. For almost as long as coal mining has existed, there has been a long-standing mutual resentment, distrust, and often hatred between coal miners and prominent figures of authority, such as their employers, colliery management, and the government. It is a direct manifestation of the strong bond that develops between coal miners as a result of the nature of their profession and the significance that is placed upon collectivity in the coal-mining industry. It is often articulated with ferocious pride and loyalty.

I started using this description of the coal miners' relationship with authority and power and the strong connection that develops between coal miners under the assumption that it had not been used before. However, I later discovered Jim Bullock's autobiography *THEM and US*. Bullock's provocative title confirmed my findings.⁸⁷⁵ It is also identified by Hoggart, Reay,⁸⁷⁶ Holloway,⁸⁷⁷ and Willis.⁸⁷⁸

Hoggart asserts that the "'Them' and 'Us'" mentality is central to the formation of working-class identity.⁸⁷⁹ He identifies "Them" as being a "composite dramatic figure"⁸⁸⁰ and "chief character"⁸⁸¹ in the world of the working-class. "The world of the 'Them' is the world of bosses, whether those bosses are private individuals, or, as is increasingly the case today, public officials."⁸⁸² Key figures of authority that are seen as "Them" are "the policemen and those civil servants or

⁸⁷⁵ See: Bullock, *THEM and US*.

⁸⁷⁶ See: Reay, "The Double-Bind of the 'Working-Class' Feminist Academic," 21.

⁸⁷⁷ See: Holloway, "Finding a Voice," 194.

⁸⁷⁸ See: Willis, *Learning to Labour*, 11.

⁸⁷⁹ See: Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy*, 57-84.

⁸⁸⁰ Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy*, 57.

⁸⁸¹ Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy*, 57.

⁸⁸² Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy*, 57.

local-authority employees whom the working-classes meet – teachers, the school attendance man, ‘the Corporation’, [and] the local bench.”⁸⁸³ This extends to all other areas of life, from sport (where the referee is quite often seen as one of “Them”),⁸⁸⁴ to religion (where it transforms into a form of anti-clericalism or even misotheism or dystheism - something that my own data in fact confirms, as we will see in chapter six).⁸⁸⁵ It is a division that occurs because of economic and social disadvantages, as well as vast inequalities of power which manifests itself in a deep and unyielding mistrust and suspicion of anyone that holds power of any sort.

I, however, identify this mentality as being a “versus” rather than an “and” because in coal-mining culture the relationship between the workforce/employees and the owners/employers has descended into one of direct confrontation. It is not just a matter of deriving collective identity by identifying who one is not (as both Hoggart, Hall, and Gilman suggest is the primary purpose of ‘othering’ behaviour), but instead it is an all-out war for survival. One of the reasons for this is because of the long history of often violent workplace disputes between coal miners and their employers. Their working-class “Them and Us” mentality has transformed into a more combative “Us versus Them” mentality.

Whilst this mentality is difficult to directly document and evidence, it is equally as difficult to determine who is to blame for its development: the coal miners, their employers, or the government? Regardless of this, it is evident that the collective nature of coal mining (as will be explained in greater depth shortly) coupled with the defensive strategies common to the working-class, have directly led to coal miners developing a mentality whereby any source of power or authority that is deemed a threat to the wellbeing, security, and power of their collective is met with a potent and often explosive collective response.

In addition to this, the camaraderie that develops between coal miners is also a product of the danger of their profession. Each and every coal miner that participated in this research project emphasised the importance of “looking out for one another.” Even though each coal miner also noted that rows over money,

⁸⁸³ Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy*, 57.

⁸⁸⁴ See: Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy*, 92.

⁸⁸⁵ See: Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy*, 95-96.

bonuses, contracts, and overtime dominated their workplace relationships, they all fervently assured me that if something went wrong, if someone was injured, trapped, or dying, no-one would leave until that person was out, dead or alive. The following detailed account explains this:

I was about 21 years old at Rawdon colliery working with two other lads about the same age. Our job was supplying, taking timber and steel to 97's face using a rope haulage and tubs system. Suddenly there was a lot of talk and commotion going on over the tannoy system, calling for all available men to get to the 98's Heading (which was a singled tunnel). Making our way there we discussed what could have happened, concluding it must have been an accident and they wanted stretcher bearers - a common occurrence underground - but when we arrived at 98's we found out that the tunnel had collapsed and people were still in there. After minutes of being there we discovered there was only 1 man in there and it was the deputy (supervisor). He had been the last man making his way out when they heard rumbling, etc. We were deployed to advancing timber props, so that the men digging frantically away to access the trapped man could set props to protect themselves. Myself and my two mates were in the background as face trained men were doing the rescue exercise. Suddenly we heard that they had got to him, was he ok? We couldn't get to find out what was happening. All we knew was that the word had come from the colliery overman (senior supervisor) to clear the pit. We made our way to the train to comply with this order, baffled with what was happening. By chance, the overman sat with us in the train carriage and he started to cry, everyone sat quiet, then we sensed that he had died. Nobody said a word, we rode out to the pit bottom in silence and as we got to the pit bottom we passed a doctor and nurse coming down the pit and making their way to the train. I later found out that this is the procedure followed when someone dies. This was a very sad time.

Similarly, another coal miner explained to me how, when working at a colliery that had had a catastrophic tunnel collapse, he always nodded his head as a sign of respect when walking past the area where the tunnel had collapsed, as the men that were in there at the time were buried by it and their bodies never retrieved. The bond between coal miners and the reliance they have upon one another, supersedes all other traits of the industry.

This strong bond between coal miners has led to the development of a collective voice, which was evident in the CBS section of this research. Therefore,

when I describe interpretations as being put forward "by the group," they really were put forward by the group. There was never any differing or diverging of opinion. Each man voiced almost word-for-word the exact same thing. Whilst it could be argued that in a group setting many people would go along with the views of the group to avoid potential conflict or confrontation, I do not believe that this is the case here. The "homeworks" produced by each man confirm this.

For example, for the Genesis 11:1-9 session, each coal miner annotated their "homeworks" with comments relating to the "Us versus Them" mentality of coal-mining culture: Mr Black wrote "Torries [sic] said we had too much power," Mr Brown wrote "Also makes me think of the strike in '84 how everyone was separated via politics + unions" and "This is the coal miners forming a union to keep everyone together," Mr Purple wrote "Teams disrupted coursing upset and unsertanity [sic], pit closed loss of control, identity, team spirit and comradery," and Mr Green wrote "GOD = MANAGEMENT OR THATCHER," "Sounds like union and men getting to strong for management or government," and "Management + Government setting string and getting backing off other workforces + starting to all stick together with a possibility of taking control."⁸⁸⁶ Even though each man completed this task alone at home, they almost always wrote the same thing.

Whilst this emphasis on collectivity and unity is a source of great positivity and strength for coal miners, it has also led to those on the outside of the collective being 'othered' and labelled a threat. This is why employers, both companies and individual owners, and the British government, particularly any Conservative governments, have faced such volatile opposition from the coal-mining industry and their representative unions. It can be understood as a mentality whereby coal miners perpetually see themselves as being a collective that is at odds with those in power and that this perceived reality means that there is a continuous and unceasing need for coal miners to fight such power for the good of their collective. This mentality dominates a coal miner's worldview and makes it almost impossible to form positive relationships with those in power. As one Deputy told me, "it's

⁸⁸⁶ Chapter six will unpack further how the themes uncovered in my ethnographic research manifested in the final CBS programme and how my initial ethnographic study enabled me to better understand the contextual interpretations and parallels produced by the coal miners.

hard being a Deputy, you have to make sure you're still seen as one of the men. I hate it when they think I'm bloody management. Management never get off their arses and come down to where we are! I get my hands dirty! I might manage the shift, but I ain't management." Such a statement clearly indicates that authority figures are seen as "Them," but also that the boundaries of between "Us" and "Them" are not as fixed as they may seem and are open to contestation.

The Perilous State of a Perilous Industry: The Trauma of Mass Involuntary Redundancy

Al Gini⁸⁸⁷ states that "work, food and sex are the most commonly shared behavioural traits of adult life"⁸⁸⁸ and that we must take seriously the fact that "work is one of the primary means by which adults find their identity and form their character."⁸⁸⁹ Gini even jests that Descartes was wrong with concluding "I think therefore I am" and suggests that instead "*Laboro ergo sum*" is by far more accurate.⁸⁹⁰ Gini argues that the connection between identity and vocation is most evident when an unexpected change in an individual's professional circumstances forces them to re-evaluate themselves. For example, Gini notes:

With the anchor of adulthood ripped away, with few prospects in sight, but with bills to be paid, mortgages to be met and children to be educated the "terminatee" is often reduced to adolescent torpor. This person is forced to ask the questions: Who am I now? What have I accomplished? What can I do? Who will I become?⁸⁹¹

⁸⁸⁷ Al Gini has written extensively on the role work plays in our lives and the impact it has upon our individual and collective identity. For example, see: Al Gini, *My Job, My Self: Work and the Creation of the Modern Individual* (London: Routledge, 2001), "Work, Identity and Self: How We Are Formed by the Work We Do," *Journal of Business Ethics* 17/7 (1998): 707-714.

⁸⁸⁸ Gini, "Work, Identity and Self," 707.

⁸⁸⁹ Gini, "Work, Identity and Self," 708.

⁸⁹⁰ Gini, "Work, Identity and Self," 714.

⁸⁹¹ Gini, "Work, Identity and Self," 709.

Thus, the inseparability of occupation and identity means that issues such as the lack of outsider understanding of a profession, involuntary redundancy, unemployment, or a change in career or lifestyle can be traumatic experiences for a person.

Similarly, Melissa A. Parris and Margaret H. Vickers, when looking at white-collared workers’ experiences of redundancy, argue that according to Western conceptions of masculinity, it is still the norm for men to associate their success as a man in terms of their ability to succeed in a well-paid and reputable vocation. Parris and Vickers highlight that “work still holds the central role in the “package deal” of masculine identity”⁸⁹² and that in a world where “participation in paid work is central to the construction of male identity, then it is no surprise that unemployment has been identified as a major assault on this identity.”⁸⁹³ If we consider Gini’s analysis of the connection between vocation and identity, as well as Parris and Vickers’s analysis of the connection between masculinity and employment,⁸⁹⁴ in light of the knowledge we already have about coal miners, we can infer that the men employed by this industry are extremely vulnerable when it comes to the potential negative impact that involuntary redundancy and unemployment can result in. For example, such men are not only affected by the reality that human beings find identity through work, as Gini suggests, but they are also subjected to the Western societal expectation that to be successfully considered a man, they should not only hold down a job, but should also be the breadwinner of the family, as suggested by Parris and Vickers. Therefore, the

⁸⁹² Melissa A. Parris and Margaret H. Vickers, ““Look at Him... He’s Failing’: Male Executives’ Experiences of Redundancy,” *Employee Responsibilities and Rights Journal* 22/4 (2010): 345-357 (347).

⁸⁹³ Parris and Vickers, ““Look at Him...” 348.

⁸⁹⁴ Whilst not all relevant, my thinking with regard to the connection between identity and vocation and the psychological impact of redundancy upon men in particular has also been influenced by the following: Lars Joelsson and Leif Wahlquist, “The Psychological Meaning of Job Insecurity and Job Loss: Results of a Longitudinal Study,” *Social Science & Medicine* 25/2 (1987): 179-182; Kirsi Lapointe, “Narrating Career, Positioning Identity: Career Identity as a Narrative Practice,” *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 77/1 (2010): 1-9; Timothy Charles Lloyd, *Lake Erie fishermen: Work, Identity, and Tradition* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990); Jesse Potter, *Crisis at Work: Identity and the End of Career* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); Tim Strangleman, “Work Identity in Crisis? Rethinking the Problem of Attachment and Loss at Work,” *The Journal of The British Sociological Association* 46/3 (2012): 411-425. Lloyd’s study has been particularly helpful as whilst the two professions that are considered are distinctly different, the way in which both sets of men have their identity defined by their profession is almost identical.

experience of involuntary redundancy for coal miners results in a tri-part assault on their identities: upon the reality of their vocationally saturated lives, their ability to be a functional human being, and their ability to be a "real man."

As I have personally witnessed the devastating impact of involuntary redundancy on coal miners, I am acutely aware of the reality Gini and Parris and Vickers describe. The unusually strong connection between vocation and identity for coal miners makes the prospect of involuntary redundancy a very serious and traumatic matter. When a coal miner is forced to leave the vocation that has come to define them, their life and identity are thus thrown into question.

To properly comprehend the impact the phenomena of mass involuntary redundancy and the demise of Britain's coal-mining industry has upon coal miners, it is crucial that we recognise that as the experience and repercussions of such events cause such significant emotional and psychological distress, upheaval, and pain they should be considered more akin to trauma than anything else. Furthermore, these two separate, yet connected, events are experienced by coal miners as collective traumas. However, before I unpack this statement, it is first pertinent that I define how I am using the term "trauma," which has been taken from the work of Jeffrey C. Alexander:⁸⁹⁵

Traumatic status is attributed to real or imagined phenomena, not because of their actual harmfulness or their objective abruptness, but

⁸⁹⁵ See: Jeffrey C. Alexander, *Trauma: A Social Theory* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012). "Toward a Theory of Cultural Trauma," in *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, eds. Jeffrey C. Alexander et al. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 1-30, *The Meanings of Social Life: A Cultural Sociology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), Jeffrey C. Alexander, Ron Eyerman, and Elizabeth Butler Breese, eds., *Narrating Trauma: On the Impact of Collective Suffering* (Boulder: Paradigm Press, 2013). Whilst I am aware that Alexander's definition of trauma is one among many, Alexander is a prominent and influential figure in this area of study, therefore it can be safely assumed that his work on trauma is widely accepted as accurate. Potential alternative studies are as follows: Akiko Hashimoto, *The Long Defeat: Cultural Trauma, Memory, and Identity in Japan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), Conny Mithander, John Sundholm, and Maria Holmgren Troy, eds., *Collective Traumas: Memories of War and Conflict in 20th-century Europe* (Brussels: P. I. E. Peter Lang, 2007), Clara Mucci, *Beyond Individual and Collective Trauma: Intergenerational Transmission, Psychoanalytic Treatment, and the Dynamics of Forgiveness* (London: Karnac Books, 2013), Arthur G. Neal, *National Trauma and Collective Memory: Extraordinary Events in the American Experience* (London: M. E. Sharpe, 2005), Antonius C. G. M Robben and Marcelo Suarez-Orozco, eds., *Cultures Under Siege: Collective Violence and Trauma* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), Jack Saul, *Collective Trauma, Collective Healing: Promoting Community Resilience in the Aftermath of Disaster* (London: Routledge, 2013), Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Culture of Defeat: On National Trauma, Mourning, and Recovery* (London: Granta, 2004).

because these phenomena are believed to have abruptly, and harmfully, affected collective identity.⁸⁹⁶

Alexander thus proposes that collective or cultural trauma should be understood to mean the following:

Cultural trauma occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways.⁸⁹⁷

Whilst the vast majority of studies that focus upon collective or cultural trauma focus upon cultures whose trauma is the product of horrific events, such as war or genocide, the theories that are used to analyse the collective or cultural impact of such events are still relevant to my study. For example, whilst the coal miners in my study may not have experienced the violence and terror that war and genocide incite, they have experienced the destruction, erosion, and cessation of their culture, and thus their collective identity, that often comes in the wake of such events. Therefore, whilst their trauma may have solely psychological origins, it is still nevertheless traumatic.

Using Alexander,⁸⁹⁸ I have therefore determined that the phenomena of mass involuntary redundancy and the demise of Britain's coal-mining industry have

⁸⁹⁶ Alexander, *The Meanings of Social Life*, 92.

⁸⁹⁷ Alexander, "Toward a Theory of Cultural Trauma," 1.

⁸⁹⁸ In addition to being primarily influenced by the work of Alexander on collective trauma, I have also been influenced by the work of Shelly Rambo on individual trauma and in particular its relationship to suffering and the way in which theology and the Bible can help in the understanding and healing of both suffering and trauma. Rambo distinguishes trauma from suffering by noting that "Trauma is the suffering that does not go away" and that the study of trauma is the study of what remains after suffering. See: Shelly Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma: A Theology of Remaining* (Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 15. Similarly, in an online interview Rambo notes that theologians are "beginning to see... that traumatic events don't end. Traumas are moving -- and we could say bleeding -- into other traumas. We don't see a clear end to a suffering event but instead a kind of overflowing of suffering." See: Faith and Leadership, "Shelly Rambo: The space between death and resurrection," *Theological Reflection*, 28 July 2014, <https://www.faithandleadership.com/qa/shelly-rambo-the-space-between-death-and-resurrection>. It is this notion of trauma as the remains of suffering and the fact it bleeds into each aspect of a person's life, thus forming new suffering and trauma, that I feel most relates to the context of the coal miners.

been experienced by British coal miners as two distinct, yet connected, collective traumas, as they have irrevocably damaged the lives and psyches of such men.

However, I must stress that whilst it is generally agreed upon that the demise of the coal-mining industry started in the 1980s under the Thatcher Conservative government, the degree to, and speed with, which the industry has been perceived to decline will differ from one coal miner to the next. In addition to this, each coal miner will have experienced mass involuntary redundancy at different times and at different moments in the overall demise of the industry, thus resulting in differing levels of trauma. For example, redundancies that took place at a time when coal miners were able to move to another colliery would not have been as traumatic an experience as those that experienced redundancy at a time when there were no collieries left (although I do not wish to downplay the trauma caused by repeated experiences of redundancy). Therefore, whilst all coal miners have experienced these two traumas, they will have occurred at different moments and to differing extents for each coal miner.

For the coal miners in this study, all agreed that the demise of the industry began in the 1980s and almost all were made involuntarily redundant as a result of Daw Mill colliery's closure. Those that experienced redundancy earlier, did so during the 1990s when the last coal mine closed in South Derbyshire, and all of these men retired as a result of this. In addition to this, with the exception of one, all contributors experienced involuntary redundancy more than once. As the majority of the men that participated in this study were made redundant in 2013 (just before deep-coal coal mining ended in Britain), the most immediate trauma witnessed by this study was therefore how these men were struggling to adjust to a life where coal mining no longer existed.

During my fieldwork, however, I repeatedly witnessed the multitude of ways both traumas manifest in the day-to-day lives of coal miners, with the following two instances being particularly powerful examples.

Firstly, when I was being shown the large archive of objects that the SDMPG have amassed over the years, it was explained to me that almost every object that they had on display was at one point stolen from a coal mine, usually upon its closure, and that coal miners "liberated" these objects upon being made

redundant. I am interested in the fact that not only were these objects taken, but they were also kept, cared for and maintained, and then donated, thus indicating that the objects were not taken for their monetary value or to be sold for a profit, but that they were taken in order to preserve them, or to preserve what they stood for—the coal miner’s identity.

Many of the objects on display in the SDMPG’s museum are also relatively obscure and have very little use outside of a coal mine, so could not have been taken for domestic use. For example, what would be the use of an engineer’s coded map of a coal mine outside of a coal mine? I consulted various coal miners about this observation and based upon their responses, I have concluded that the objects were not liberated for their worth but they were taken as it was believed that they belonged to the coal miners. Such objects were used so regularly that the men using them formed an inarticulable attachment to them, thus the objects came to define them as individuals. This bond between man and tool has not only led to the preservation of coal-mining tools, but by their very preservation they have enabled the preservation of coal-mining identity. They act as visible and tangible reminders of the coal-mining profession and are only fully recognisable and understandable by coal miners, once again maintaining their identity by drawing a boundary between who is a coal miner and who is not. This bond between man and tool therefore demonstrates the trauma experienced when a colliery closes as the coal miners are ripped away from everything that defines them and they are forced to steal whatever objects they can just to preserve their identity a little while longer.

Secondly, shortly after the closure of Daw Mill, I was approached by Mr K, a coal miner that had just been made involuntarily redundant. He had heard about my research and wanted to know whether he could contribute some photographs. What I received reduced me to tears. Mr K, a keen amateur photographer, had spent his final few moments at the colliery taking photographs of the mine now that it was devoid of men. Mr K described his “need” to take such photographs in the following manner:

I will do my best to explain how I felt with the photographs.

When everyone was sent home at Daw Mill, I was lucky to work on the surface for another week and straight away could see powerful images that should be attempted to be captured. Even then, I felt we would never mine coal again.

Being told I would be there for at least two weeks and maybe longer, there was no urgency straight away to take these photos. I also had work to do.

On the Thursday of the first week there was rumours I would be finished the next day, my immediate thoughts were no surprise at that, I must get the camera out of the car and wished I had started taking photos earlier in the week. (Even being told I was out of a job my thoughts were to get images).

When taking the photos I knew there was a lot to do, to capture how I felt. These photos were for myself, the people who worked past and present at Daw Mill, no financial gain whatsoever.

The photographer/ Miner in me was working together on this, there was to be no one in the photos (although I did take some with people in) and capture just as it was, dirty floors/walls the lot.

All the time I felt rushed, knowing my task will never get completed, those photos were the best I could do in the time I had, I still see the images I never captured, frustrating.

Anyone who has worked at Daw Mill, should see someone in every photo how it was.

On the Friday when I finished, there was lots of people walking around, emptying lockers etc. The place had a different atmosphere, emotional. Although these were powerful images I felt taking photos of this was intruding, didn't want part of it, didn't even get the camera out, it was over.

One of the most touching images produced by Mr K was that of a huge mound of bin-bags, each one filled with the belongings coal miners had left stored in their lockers, piled high in the “baths” (or shower-room). Being so moved by this photograph, I mentioned it to the other coal miners I knew that had also been made redundant. Mr A then suggested that I photograph him unpacking his bin-bag (as he had just brought it home and had yet to unpack it) so as to “carry on the story of the bin-bags.” Mr A described the closure of Daw Mill and the symbolic nature of his bin-bag in the following manner:

The beginning of the End started on a Friday Night at the end of February. I got to work, going on to coal production. Friday night shift was always a minimum manpower shift, but as I walked across the carpark there was a lot of people coming and going, I noticed rescue

brigadesmen, I immediately thought somethings going on and is not good.

I proceeded to my briefing room and discovered the pit was on fire. To be precise the tail gate end of the 32's salvage face, a very bad place to have a spontaneous combustion due to the amount of Methane about. Ultimately the fire beat the firefighters plus the fear of explosion, the pit was evacuated, Main fans switched off, which has never happened in my lifetime. As soon as this happened most of us knew that it was the end. The fire raged uncontrollable 5 miles in, the pit within hours was full of thousands of parts of Carbon Monoxide.

We all went home...

Within a few days the Company announced the closure of my pit, we couldn't believe it – or didn't want to believe it. That was it. I was an important man at my pit. I ran the production coal face, suddenly I was nobody. Is that pretentious... we were all important, skilled in our respective jobs, doing jobs that people on the surface hadn't got a clue about. Dangerous, dirty, dusty, noisy jobs that all contributed to the production of electricity. Something that all these people on the outside never thought of when they flicked the light switch or uttered the words “coal miners, didn't think there was any left!” 500 men now out of work.

We filtered back to the pit over the next few weeks emptying our lockers into bin bags and taking our equipment home, maybe with some bizarre thoughts we might need this tackle again, may as well left it, or binned the lot, but no, these dirty, grubby pieces of equipment meant something to us, so we won't through them away. They take pride of place in the shed, a sad testimony to a life's work. Chronicling my rise thru [through] the ranks. Only ever to be talked about between ex workmates and the very rare person that might be slightly interested in the diminishing quest for the black stuff.

Mr A's stunningly eloquent speech beautifully demonstrates the three ethnographic findings that I have presented as being central to understanding the context of contemporary South Derbyshire coal miners: his use of technical language and industry-know-how reminds us that we are not insiders in this context and that us outsiders need coal miners; his repeated use of “us,” “we,” and “our” overtly draws our attention to the collective mind-set of coal miners; and his inability to comprehend the recent turn of events or to part with a bin-bag of objects that mark him as a coal miner strikingly captures the reality that coal mining is who this man is and the trauma he is experiencing when faced with the reality that he will no longer be a coal miner. He can never be anything but a coal miner

and is unable to comprehend the prospect of existing and identifying in any other way.

And finally, just as Mr K needed to capture his connection to coal mining through the act of photography and Mr A needed to save his “useless” objects to preserve his identity, a further coal miner I encountered did the same through poetry. He produced a poem in honour of his time as a coal miner, which he then printed and distributed to the men he had worked with.⁸⁹⁹

Introducing Mr Black, Mr Brown, Mr Green, Mr Purple, and Mr Red - the Coal Miners that Participated in the Contextual Bible Study Programme

To fully understand the contextual readings Mr Black, Mr Brown, Mr Green, Mr Purple, and Mr Red produced during the CBS portion of this project, it would be beneficial if we first got to know them as individuals. The individual demographics of each coal miner are therefore also needed if we are to correctly grasp and understand the contextual nuances of their readings.

In order to discern and assess the extent to which each coal miners’ employment in the industry has shaped their worldview, I distributed an “employment history questionnaire” to each member of the group. The purpose of this questionnaire was to find out how long each coal miner had been employed as a coal miner and what roles he had held in the industry. The questions that were asked and a tabulation of results can be found in Appendix 12.

Each of the coal miners that contributed to the CBS sessions were born in either the late 1950s or early 1960s, making them all between the ages of fifty and seventy at the time of participation. Whilst this may seem a rather limited sample of men, this age range is in fact indicative of the current state of affairs within the British coal-mining industry, as only men who have worked in the industry for a number of decades are still employed. The only anomaly to this was Mr F, as he was

⁸⁹⁹ Unfortunately, I have been unable to get permission to print this poem here.

born in 1987 and was taken on as one of the last ever UK Coal apprentices as a favour to his father who was also a coal miner (who was in fact Mr Red/Mr C).

In addition to this, each of the men had also worked as a coal miner for almost all their lives, with the majority of them having worked in the industry for over thirty years apart from Mr Black who only worked as a coal miner for fifteen years and chose not to return to coal mining after being made redundant.

In terms of their experience of employment outside of this industry, two of the coal miners have never been employed in any other industry (Mr Red and Mr Green) and one coal miner had not taken on any other form of employment after his redundancy from coal mining (Mr Purple). In addition to this, the only employment that was held by the three coal miners that have worked in another industry before becoming coal miners (Mr Black, Mr Brown and Mr Purple) was at an apprenticeship level, which they all then left to work as coal miners. The table also illustrates that once employed by the industry, each man took the opportunity to progress and was duly promoted.

The most revealing part of this questionnaire, however, is the reason provided by each man for why they left the industry. In their answers to this question, each clearly demonstrates that he did not leave the industry of his own volition, but that instead he was forced to leave the industry (or to move to another coal mine) because his employing colliery closed. Whilst each man is pretty succinct in his description of this reality (for example, each man merely writes "redundancy," "made redundant," or "colliery closed"), the most telling response can be seen in the answer provided by Mr Green: "They didn't want us." This response openly and rather antagonistically lays the blame for his no longer being a coal miner on his employing company.

The explanation provided by Mr Green as to why he is no longer a coal miner can be considered demonstrative of the common way most coal miners perceive and interpret the phenomena of mass involuntary redundancy. Mr Green's statement highlights the fact that such an event is primarily seen as being a deliberate and purposefully orchestrated attack by colliery owners upon coal miners. The occurrence of mass involuntary redundancy is rarely seen as an occurrence that could not have been avoided and as the fault of various complex

and interconnected factors. It is instead almost always understood as being an act of punishment for the workforce coordinated by their employing company. Such events are then often fuelled by conspiracies about the real reason why such events have transpired. For example, upon the closure of Daw Mill colliery a rumour emerged whereby the fire that caused its closure, which was caused by the natural event of spontaneous combustion, was in fact deliberately started by a group of unidentified men under the instruction of the colliery’s owners, in order to punish the men and finally get rid of them.⁹⁰⁰ I would like to emphasise that this is an entirely unfounded rumour and that I am merely echoing a conspiracy that I have heard from a variety of sources.⁹⁰¹ The very fact that such a rumour exists is demonstrative of the impact that such events have upon coal miners, as well as the “Us versus Them” mentality that can be found within the industry.

Further information regarding the coal miners’ education, family life, ethnicity, and class was gleaned during various informal discussions before or after the CBS sessions. For example, the following is true for each of the men:

- Each man was only educated as far as secondary school (O Levels). However, each man did complete some form of vocational qualification with regard to coal mining. For example, each man completed an apprenticeship, but these differ depending upon what each man was employed to do in the coal mine;
- Each man is married (or has been divorced and has remarried) and has children and/or step-children;
- Each man is white;
- Each man considers himself to be working-class;
- None of the men have hobbies that they consider to be intellectual in nature. For example, none of the men are particularly avid readers. Each man does, however, regularly watch the news and/or documentary

⁹⁰⁰ In fact, many coal miners have said to me that events like this are often described as “cock-up or conspiracy.”

⁹⁰¹ The source of this conspiracy can easily be found on the Internet in various British coal-mining forums, for example. However, for ethical reasons, I will not cite the exact site or source where I came across this information.

programs and can be considered to be relatively well informed with regard to recent events and various aspects of history, geography, and so on.

There is one final aspect of their positionalities that I must stress: it must at all times be remembered that the coal miners in this study are from South Derbyshire.

The reflections offered by the men in this study regarding the state of the coal-mining industry in Britain, the events of the 1980s, the reasons behind them, their legacy, and the future of coal mining in Britain, should therefore only be considered representative of South Derbyshire coal miners. I am fully aware that some of the views expressed during this research project may prove controversial for coal miners from other areas of Britain that did strike and that they may, in fact, provoke angry responses. It must therefore be remembered that this study is seeking to investigate the contextual realities of South Derbyshire coal miners and part of this reality, however distasteful to some, is that they did not strike during the 1980s and thus held different views with regard to the state and future of coal mining in Britain.

Whilst this project is best understood as a case study, this does not mean that its findings are not reflective of, or may not offer an insight into, the context of all contemporary British coal miners. The demise of the industry and the now diasporic nature of modern coal mining has meant that the county and coal seam boundaries that once fixed and separated coal-mining communities no longer exist. Thus, the decreasing number of coal miners and the vastly longer commutes coal miners face have led to the development of a symbolic coal-mining community that transcends traditional boundaries and amalgamates all the once unique aspects of each coal-mining community into one overall coal-mining culture that all coal miners share in. Therefore, whilst this project seeks to examine the culture of South Derbyshire coal miners, the current state of coal mining in Britain has meant that this unique culture has now been subsumed into the wider overall culture of coal miners. Whilst such a move may be to the detriment of some local traditions, it ensures that the overall shared culture of coal miners is preserved.

The purpose of this chapter has therefore been to ground the following contextual readings produced by a group of South Derbyshire coal miners in both the historic and current contextual realities and culture of deep-coal coal mining in South Derbyshire. Without this ethnographic grounding, the contextual nuances and resonances of the following readings would go unnoticed and unappreciated.

CHAPTER FIVE. CONTEXTUAL BIBLE STUDY

What is Contextual Bible Study?

Contextual Bible Study and South Africa

CBS originated as a response to, and a means of addressing, the tragic contextual realities and concerns of Apartheid South Africa. It is generally considered to have been created by Gerald O. West and has since been predominantly revised by West and the Ujamaa Centre.⁹⁰² West and Ujamaa Centre’s CBS model is understood as being the definite version of CBS and it is widely accepted that this method is inextricably linked to the South African context. West himself even reminds us that “Contextual Bible Study was forged by the realities and resources of the South African context.”⁹⁰³ West and the Ujamaa Centre’s CBS manual *Doing Contextual Bible Study*⁹⁰⁴ is therefore the most widely used CBS resource. Although CBS is now being used across the globe, it is still most readily associated with the contexts of Apartheid, post-Apartheid, and post-colonial South Africa. Consequently, all current examples of CBS either originate from this context or utilise West and the Ujamaa Centre’s CBS model and rely heavily upon extant South African CBS literature. My

⁹⁰² The Ujamaa Centre was formerly known as the Institute for the Study of the Bible & Worker Ministry Project.

⁹⁰³ Gerald O. West, “Locating Contextual Bible Study within Praxis,” *Diaconia* 4/1 (2013): 43-48 (43).

⁹⁰⁴ West and the Ujamaa Centre, *Doing Contextual Bible Study*.

research is not an exception here as I too have utilised West and the Ujamaa Centre’s model.

However, whilst it is generally accepted that West created CBS, its beginnings can be traced beyond him. For example, the Kairos Document⁹⁰⁵ (which was released in South Africa in 1985⁹⁰⁶) is considered the original impetus for contextually re-reading and reappropriating the Bible in South Africa.⁹⁰⁷ Albert Nolan describes “Kairos theology”⁹⁰⁸ in the following manner: “[it] has much in common with liberation theology... [l]ike other theologies of liberation, it makes use of social analysis and is driven by Christian faith to struggle for the liberation of the oppressed.”⁹⁰⁹ CBS was therefore developed in an environment that was already seeing the benefits of a liberationist, socially-engaged, and contextually focused “Kairos theology.” In addition, CBS’ origins can also be traced to the socially-engaged liberation theology of the *Centro de Estudos Biblicos* (CEBI), founded in Brazil in 1979.⁹¹⁰ Here, socially-engaged biblical scholars work alongside “marginalised” young Christians to produce liberationist grassroots readings of the Bible.⁹¹¹ CEBI primarily uses two contextual reading strategies, namely the

⁹⁰⁵ This was a theological statement produced by a group of anonymous South African theologians (believed to have been from the black Soweto region of South Africa) that sought to challenge the churches of South Africa to begin challenging the Apartheid regime. The document was released just after South Africa was declared as being in a state of emergency. Through its open and unflinching reflection upon the realities of life in Apartheid South Africa and its critique of both state and church theology, the Kairos Document is often considered the starting point of the now widespread and deep-rooted African traditions of contextual biblical interpretation and liberation theology. Nolan has since come forward as one of the theologians responsible for its creation.

⁹⁰⁶ For more information on the original South African Kairos Document, see: Gary S. D. Leonard, ed., *Kairos: The Moment of Truth: The Kairos Documents* (Pietermaritzburg: The Ujamaa Centre, 2010).
http://ujamaa.ukzn.ac.za/Libraries/manuals/The_Kairos_Documents.sflb.ashx.

⁹⁰⁷ CBS is one of many methods of contextually reading the Bible that have developed in Africa and across the globe. For example, see the following two edited volumes for a wide selection of such reading strategies and the ideologies and methodologies that underpin them: Fernando F. Segovia and Mary Ann Tolbert, eds., *Reading from this Place: Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in the United States, Volume One* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), *Reading from this Place: Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in Global Perspective, Volume Two* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995).

⁹⁰⁸ Albert Nolan, “Kairos Theology,” in *Doing Theology in Context: South African Perspectives*, eds. John W. de Gruchy and Charles Villa-Vinceto (New York: Orbis Books, 1994), 212-218.

⁹⁰⁹ Nolan, “Kairos Theology,” 215.

⁹¹⁰ For more on the history of CEBI, see: CEBI, “History,” 6 February 2014, <http://www.cebi.org.br/noticias.php?tipo=institucional&secaoId=52>.

⁹¹¹ Carlos Mesters is one such scholar. See: Carlos Mesters, “A Brazilian Example: ‘Listening to What the Spirit Is Saying to the Churches’ – Popular Interpretation of the Bible in Brazil,” in *Voices*

“hermeneutical triangle”⁹¹² and the “four sides” approach.⁹¹³ Thus, West and the Ujamaa Centre’s “See-Judge-Act” method (which is how CBS is principally described) was influenced and shaped by the extant South African “Kairos theology” and the two Brazilian reading strategies.⁹¹⁴

The inseparable connection between CBS and the tragic contextual realities of South Africa cannot, however, be stressed enough. Recognising how issues such as colonialism and Apartheid, as well as many other aspects of contemporary South Africa, have shaped the development of both the method and ideology of CBS is essential to first understanding CBS and then implementing it in contexts external to South Africa. The following three examples highlight the extent to which CBS is contextually-bound.

First, West locates the field of CBS as being directly amongst the “marginalised,” oppressed, or poorer sections of society and identifies the “ordinary” readers with whom CBS practitioners should ideally work with as “marginalised.”⁹¹⁵ However, West’s description of CBS’ “ordinary” readers as “marginalised” is, in fact, reflective of the Apartheid, post-Apartheid, and post-colonial context of South Africa. Thus, when he uses the term “marginalised” he is using it in a specific manner to refer to life in contemporary South Africa. In such a context “a multitude of challenges, such as culture, HIV/AIDS, famine, abject poverty, neo-colonial dictators, ecclesial conflicts, economic downturns, closure of

from the Margin: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World, ed. R. S. Sugirtharajah (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2006), 431-441, *Defenseless Flower: A New Reading of the Bible*, trans. Francis McDonagh (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1989), “The Use of the Bible in Christian Communities of the Common People,” in *The Bible and Liberation: Political and Social Hermeneutics*, eds. Norman K. Gottwald and Richard A. Horsely (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1984), 3-16.

⁹¹² CEBI, “Method,” 8 April 2014,

<http://www.cebi.org.br/noticias.php?tipo=institucional&secaold=53>.

⁹¹³ An approach created by Gilberto Gorgulho. See: Gerald O. West, “Articulating, Owning and Mainstreaming Local Theologies: The Contribution of Contextual Bible Study,” *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 122 (2005): 23-35 (26-27).

⁹¹⁴ West and the Ujamaa Centre repeatedly acknowledge the influence of CEBI and the Kairos Document on their development of CBS. For example, see: Gerald O. West, “Tracing the ‘Kairos’ Trajectory from South African (1985) to Palestine (2009): Discerning Continuities and Differences,” *Journal of Theology for South Africa* 143 (2012): 4-22; and West and the Ujamaa Centre, *Doing Contextual Bible Study*, 4; and West, “Articulating, Owning and Mainstreaming Local Theologies,” 27.

⁹¹⁵ For example, West specifically describes the CBS participants with whom he primarily works as “marginalised,” “black,” “female” and “South African.” See: West, *The Academy of the Poor*, 9-10.

healthcare facilities, mortality, as well as a fast decline in the life expectancy for both female and male"⁹¹⁶ exist. It is from this context that the term "marginalised" as understood within CBS discourse arose and it is therefore within this context alone that the term should be understood. Thus, the very language of CBS is a product of, and has been shaped by, the context of South Africa. However, this contextually-bound nature of CBS discourse, especially the term "marginalised", has thus far been unacknowledged. My own research and, more specifically, my claim that CBS should be grounded in ethnography seeks to address this situation by alerting CBS practitioners to the inherently contextual nature of CBS.

Secondly, given that CBS' birthplace is in South Africa, its development has also been influenced by post-colonial biblical criticism. Just as the rise of African post-colonial biblical criticism in the past decade had the purpose of producing "a critical anti-colonial reading strategy aimed at challenging the dominant Euro-American epistemologies and modes of biblical interpretation"⁹¹⁷ and that it was developed to question how "these colonial and neo-colonial modes of interpretation repudiate or embrace colonial infiltration, conquest, imperialist capitalist exploitations, gender, race and class oppression and neo-colonial domination,"⁹¹⁸ so too has CBS had this purpose. This has meant that many African CBS programmes often share many of the same goals as post-colonial biblical criticism. For example, Nzimande adapted the original CBS model to create her "Imbokodo" version of the method, which overtly "seeks to resist distorted colonial historical depictions by providing a "counter-memory"⁹¹⁹ of the negative colonial

⁹¹⁶ Israel Kamudzandu, "Biblical Interpretation and Criticism in Neocolonial Africa: Challenges, Conceptualizations, and Needs in the Twenty-First Century," in *The Future of the Biblical Past: Envisioning Biblical Studies on a Global Key*, eds. Roland Boer and Fernando F. Segovia (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012), 3-12 (3).

⁹¹⁷ Makhosazana K. Nzimande, "Reconfiguring Jezebel: A Postcolonial Imbokodo Reading Of The Story Of Naboth'S Vineyard (I Kings 21:1-16)" in *African and European Readers of the Bible in Dialogue In Quest of a Shared Meaning*, eds. Hans de Wit and Gerald O. West (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 223-258 (223).

⁹¹⁸ Nzimande, "Reconfiguring Jezebel," 223.

⁹¹⁹ "Counter-memory" is used by Nzimande to refer to the purposeful and often political practice of creating a new collective history that runs counter to the official history of Africa. It includes relearning the suppressed and excluded histories of African peoples and reframing the chronicle of history to centre upon acts that are of significance to Africa rather than the West.

historical depictions of African women aimed at keeping their memories alive and using these aids in the reading of the post-apartheid bible."⁹²⁰

Finally, we are reminded of the inseparable connection between the Bible and colonialism in Africa by Knut Holter when he examines how the two primary methods of reading the Bible in colonial Africa (which consisted of either "seeing Africa in the Bible" or "seeing the Bible in Africa"⁹²¹) resulted in interpretations whereby "the relationship between the two always turns out to the advantage of Europe and the disadvantage of Africa."⁹²² Biblical interpretations produced in light of colonial Africa therefore "reflect a context where an asymmetric distribution of political power and cultural hegemony is taken for granted and where critical perspectives vis-a-vis this context are lacking."⁹²³ Contextual biblical interpretation in Africa must therefore focus upon "critically investigating biblical texts in light of the overwhelming presence, role, and influence of empire in their production."⁹²⁴ It is thus the challenge of methods such as CBS to develop these counter-voices.

It could therefore be argued that CBS could have arisen from within any continent or country, so long as the same tragic contextual realities of modern South Africa were present. It was the multifarious complex contextual realities and challenging history of South Africa, rather than its geographical location that led to CBS' development.

Contextual Bible Study beyond South Africa

Outside of South Africa, CBS has primarily been used and developed in Glasgow by John Riches. Riches, inspired by West and the Ujamaa Centre's work, founded the

⁹²⁰ Nzimande, "Reconfiguring Jezebel," 225.

⁹²¹ Knut Holter, "Does a dialogue between Africa and Europe make sense?" in *African and European Readers of the Bible in Dialogue: In Quest of a Shared Meaning*, eds. Hans de Wit and Gerald O. West (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 69-80 (71).

⁹²² Holter, "Does a dialogue between Africa and Europe make sense?" 73.

⁹²³ Holter, "Does a dialogue between Africa and Europe make sense?" 76.

⁹²⁴ Hans Snoek, "Key Concepts in the Dialogue between African and European Biblical Scholars," in *African and European Readers of the Bible in Dialogue: In Quest of a Shared Meaning*, eds. Hans de Wit and Gerald O. West (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 85-104 (224).

ecumenical "Contextual Bible Study Development Group" (CBSDG) in 1995.⁹²⁵ This was done in collaboration with his colleagues from the University of Glasgow's Biblical Studies department, various representatives from a number of Scottish churches, and members of the Scottish Bible Society.

Riches' implementation and application of CBS in Scotland focused primarily upon reading the Bible with "poor and marginalised"⁹²⁶ communities in contemporary Scottish society.⁹²⁷ This focus resulted in the vast majority of CBS programmes organised by the CBSDG being conducted with groups from the deprived housing estates of suburban areas of Glasgow.⁹²⁸ In addition to this, Peden also conducted a CBS programme with female inmates at Cornton Vale Prison, Stirling.⁹²⁹ The focus of Scottish CBS upon the "poor and marginalised" has been defended thus:

⁹²⁵ I cannot find evidence of this group still existing. Their blog can still be found at the following address: The Contextual Bible Study Development Group, "Contextual Bible Study (Scotland)," 9 April 2013, <http://contextualbiblestudyscotland.blogspot.co.uk/>. However, it has not been updated since 2013. Similarly, no new references to the group exist on either the Scottish Bible Society's website or the Glasgow Churches Together's website, both of which originally supported the group.

⁹²⁶ The Scottish Bible Society and the Contextual Bible Study Development Group, *Conversations: The Companion* (Scotland: Scottish Bible Society, circa 2011), 7.

⁹²⁷ This emphasis upon working with individuals and groups considered "poor and marginalised" is directly reflective of West's CBS.

⁹²⁸ Very little of the work conducted by the CBSDG has been published and as the group appears to no longer exist, it has been very difficult for me to access and assess what CBS programmes they actually organised. The only published works that at the time of writing I have been able to find regarding CBS in Scotland have been published by Riches and Peden, examples of which are: John Riches, et al., *What is Contextual Bible Study? A Practical Guide with Group Studies for Advent and Lent* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2010); John Riches, "Worship Resources, Contextual Bible Study: Some Reflections," *Expository Times* 117/1 (2005): 23-26, "Interpreting the Bible in African Contexts: Glasgow Consultation," in *Reading With African Overtures: An Exploration of the Interface Between Critical and Ordinary Readings of the Bible*, eds. Gerald O. West and Musa W. Dube (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996), 181-188, "Refreshing Bible Study," circa 2003. At the beginning of my research this article could be accessed via the following link, <http://www.grow-with-the-bible.org.uk/pages/data.asp?layout=page.htm&Type=&Id=959>, however it now appears that this website no longer exists. A copy of the article can, however, now be found on the following website: Core Skills for Churches, "Refreshing Bible Study, Professor John Riches," date unknown, <http://www.coreskillsforchurches.com/pages/data.asp?layout=GW.htm&Id=959>. Peden, "Contextual Bible Study at Cornton Vale Women's Prison, Stirling." In addition to the above publications by Riches and Peden, the following publication in honour of Riches also makes reference to his work with CBS: Paul Middleton, Angus Paddison and Karen Wenell, eds., *Paul, Grace and Freedom: Essays in Honour of John K. Riches* (London: T & T Clark, 2009).

⁹²⁹ Peden, "Contextual Bible Study at Cornton Vale Women's Prison, Stirling."

One of the commitments of the CBS Development Group is to read the Bible with groups of the ‘poor and marginalised’. Behind this commitment lies the belief that God has a special concern for such groups and that therefore these groups are very often able to hear the biblical text with a clarity that others may not achieve... This is not to say that that message is for such groups only; but rather that people who have been on the receiving end of the inequalities and injustices of our society may respond with great immediacy to such a message.⁹³⁰

The focus upon the “poor and marginalised” demonstrates how CBS practitioners have thus far failed to acknowledge the contextually-bound nature of both CBS method and discourse.⁹³¹ My call to incorporate ethnography into CBS would therefore encourage practitioners to focus more closely upon, and incorporate more thoroughly, context—both of those they are “reading with” and from which CBS arose—which would not only ensure that the context of those being “read with” is examined, described, and made reference to more thoroughly, but also that the scope of CBS is not limited by focusing solely upon particular contexts – which would be the outcome if practitioners fail to realise that terms such as “marginalised” in CBS discourse are products of CBS’ South African origins.

In terms of the published output of CBS in Scotland, two CBS manuals have been produced: Riches’ *What is Contextual Bible Study?*⁹³² and The Scottish Bible Society and the CBSDG’s *Conversations*.⁹³³ “Conversations” is the principal term used by many of the Scottish scholars to refer to CBS and has been adopted by the Scottish Bible Society as their version of CBS which forms the basis of one of their seven small group study methods for Bible reading.⁹³⁴ “Conversations” is described by the Scottish Bible Society as:

⁹³⁰ The Scottish Bible Society and the Contextual Bible Study Development Group, *Conversations*, 7-8.

⁹³¹ This same focus upon the “poor and marginalised” can also be seen in almost all other examples of CBS outside of South Africa.

⁹³² Riches et al., *What is Contextual Bible Study?*

⁹³³ The Scottish Bible Society and the Contextual Bible Study Development Group, *Conversations*.

⁹³⁴ The other six approaches are: “Inductive reading,” “Hearing the Word,” “Lectio Divina,” “Talk the Word,” “Contemplative Reading,” and “Manuscript Reading.” For more on these methods, see: The Scottish Bible Society, “Small Group Bible Study Resources,” 2015, <http://scottishbiblesociety.org/equip/>.

...a contextual approach to Bible Study... [that] encourages participants to share in a conversation around any selected passage or text, helping the group to hear God speaking to them through that text. Attention is given to the language and historical context of the text, as well as the present day context of the participants.⁹³⁵

Conversations is similarly described as being designed “to introduce people to a fresh way of exploring the Scriptures in groups and to help train facilitators to run *Conversations* sessions.”⁹³⁶ In addition to this manual, the Scottish Bible Society also provide a large array of free digital resources to enable churches and individuals to organise their own CBS programmes, as well as providing an opportunity for groups to read the interpretations produced by other groups.⁹³⁷

Since the formation of the CBSDG, the influence of CBS in Scotland has spread and it can still be found as a method of biblical interpretation in various Scottish churches.⁹³⁸ Additionally, a small number of academic reflections on CBS in Scotland have also been produced. For example, Eric Anum produced an assessment of the Scottish appropriation of CBS when he visited the University of Glasgow in 2002, just after West was a visiting scholar there.⁹³⁹

In addition to the Scottish development of CBS, a consortium of Dutch and Nordic scholars have also started developing the method for use in European settings and as a tool for encouraging intercultural dialogue. Notable scholars involved in this consortium include: Hans de Wit, Janet Dyk, Holter, Hans Snoek, Gerard van Zanden, Jan Hendrik van Wijk, Willemien van Berkum, and Jeroen Jansen. A number of more international scholars also work alongside those situated in north-western Europe, such as Louis C. Jonker, Daniel S. Schipani, and Werner

⁹³⁵ The Scottish Bible Society, “Small Group Bible Study Resources”.

⁹³⁶ The Scottish Bible Society and the Contextual Bible Study Development Group, *Conversations*, 3.

⁹³⁷ The Scottish Bible Society often update their website with PDF files containing the contextual interpretations produced by the participants of the CBS sessions they organise. For example, see: The Scottish Bible Society, “Conversations: Advent Study,” <http://scottishbiblesociety.org/resources/conversations-advent-study/>.

⁹³⁸ For example, see: St Mary’s Cathedral in Glasgow, “Bible Study Group,” 2015, <http://thecathedral.org.uk/activities/bible-study-group/>; The Augustine United Church in Edinburgh, “Regular Activities: Contextual Bible Study – open to all,” 2015, http://www.augustine.org.uk/diary/activities/index.php?activities_id=22.

⁹³⁹ Eric Anum, “Toward Intercultural Contextual Bible Study: A Review of the Adoption of Contextual Bible Study (from South Africa) in the West of Scotland,” *International Review of Mission* 91/361 (2002): 224-236.

Kahl. Whilst the focus of CBS in Scotland was primarily upon social engagement, the focus of the Dutch and Nordic scholars has instead been more academic in nature. This is primarily because this network of scholars largely focuses upon how CBS and other contextual biblical interpretation methodologies can be integrated into, and further developed by, the European/North American academy, as well as how the discipline of Biblical Studies can be enhanced by cross-cultural dialogue.⁹⁴⁰ This is demonstrated by the fact that much of their focus is upon methodology, ideology, pedagogy, and terminology.

The Dutch and Nordic development of CBS focuses upon “intercultural” Bible reading, which is described as the following:

Intercultural Bible reading is a new, fascinating way of reading the Bible and gives Biblical stories an unknown profundity. Participants read the same Biblical story together with other readers who usually come from radically different cultures. They are being challenged to grasp new, unfamiliar insights of a Biblical story and they experience this as a very enriching process.⁹⁴¹

The origins of this Dutch and Nordic engagement with CBS can be traced to the 1999 “Through the Eyes of Another” project devised by VU University Amsterdam’s theology faculty and the Protestant Church in the Netherlands. The project took place between 2001 and 2004 and was based upon a series of smaller projects that took place from 1997 to 1998 which were conducted by a group of Dutch, African, and Latin American scholars.⁹⁴² Output from this project includes the following: 1. The founding of the website “Through the Eyes of Another: Intercultural Bible Reading” which seeks to function as an online platform for the development of cross-cultural Biblical Studies by offering support for individuals to establish their own CBS groups; 2. The 2004 publication *Through the Eyes of*

⁹⁴⁰ However, this does not mean that such scholars are not also socially-engaged.

⁹⁴¹ Hans de Wit, et al., ‘Through the Eyes of Another’: Intercultural Bible Reading - Manual for facilitators and reporters (Amsterdam: VU University Amsterdam/Protestant Church in the Netherlands, 2011), 3,
http://www.bible4all.org/Content/scholar_documents.aspx?pagina_id=22&ah=5.

⁹⁴² See: Through the Eyes of Another: Intercultural Bible Reading, “History,” 2016,
http://www.bible4all.org/Content/content.aspx?pagina_id=8&ah=2.

Another;⁹⁴³ The on-line resource '*Through the Eyes of Another*': *Intercultural Bible Reading - Manual for facilitators and reporters*;⁹⁴⁴ The 2015 volume *Bible and Transformation*;⁹⁴⁵ and, numerous journal articles such as Jonker's "On Becoming a Family: Multiculturality and Interculturality in South Africa".⁹⁴⁶

In addition, in 2006, the Protestant Church in the Netherlands organised a conference in Stellenbosch for South African and Dutch and Nordic scholars to meet and discuss how Biblical Studies can benefit from an international dialogue between biblical scholars working with contextual biblical interpretation methods in vastly different global settings. This conference focused upon the theme of "exegesis and actualisation" and culminated in the production of the 2008 volume *African and European Readers of the Bible in Dialogue*,⁹⁴⁷ the contents of which are demonstrative of the predominantly academic focus of this group.

The work being done on CBS by scholars working in the Netherlands has resulted in the creation of the *Intercultural Biblical Hermeneutics* book series, which was created in honour of Archbishop Dom Hélder Câmara, the Archbishop of the Diocese of Olinda and Recife in northeast Brazil from 1964 to 1985.⁹⁴⁸ The first two books in this series are de Wit's *Empirical Hermeneutics, Interculturality, and Holy Scripture*⁹⁴⁹ and Charlene van der Walt's *Toward a Communal Reading of 2 Samuel 13*.⁹⁵⁰

In addition to the above, CBS has also been used by a further handful of European and North American biblical scholars including Cornwall and Nixon,⁹⁵¹

⁹⁴³ Hans de Wit et al., eds., *Through the Eyes of Another: Intercultural Bible Reading* (Indiana: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 2004).

⁹⁴⁴ de Wit, et al., "'Through the Eyes of Another'".

⁹⁴⁵ Hans de Wit and Janet Dyk, eds., *Bible and Transformation: The Promise of Intercultural Bible Reading* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015).

⁹⁴⁶ Louis C. Jonker, "On Becoming a Family: Multiculturality and Interculturality in South Africa," *The Expository Times* 118/10 (2007): 480-487.

⁹⁴⁷ Hans de Wit and Gerald O. West, eds., *African and European Readers on the Bible in Dialogue: In Quest of a Shared Meaning* (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

⁹⁴⁸ Dedicating this volume to Câmara emphasises the link between CBS and Latin America.

⁹⁴⁹ Hans de Wit, *Empirical Hermeneutics, Interculturality, and Holy Scripture* (Indiana: Foundation Dom Hélder Câmara Chair, VU University Amsterdam and the Institute of Mennonite Studies, 2014, 2014).

⁹⁵⁰ Charlene van der Walt, *Toward a Communal Reading of 2 Samuel 13: Ideology and Power within the Intercultural Bible Reading Process* (Indiana: Foundation Dom Hélder Câmara Chair, VU University Amsterdam and the Institute of Mennonite Studies, 2014).

⁹⁵¹ For example, see: Susannah Cornwall, "Contextual Bible Study: Characteristics and Challenges" *Modern Believing* 53/1 (2012): 14-22, Cornwall and Nixon, "Readings from the Road."

Ipsen,⁹⁵² Ekblad,⁹⁵³ Lawrence,⁹⁵⁴ Casey Strine,⁹⁵⁵ Gitte Buch-Hansen and Marlene Ringgaard Lorensen,⁹⁵⁶ and David J. Chalcraft.⁹⁵⁷ In terms of how CBS has been used by such scholars, it appears as though it has primarily been adopted as a "side-line" research activity, used as an additional research methodology to investigate an already established research interest. For example, if we consider Strine's CBS project, which sought to investigate how asylum seekers and refugees in Sheffield read and interpreted numerous Genesis narratives, it is evident that whilst Strine is conducting interesting research and is being passionately socially-engaged, the impetus for his project lies in his already developed research interests which focus on the Hebrew Bible and forced migration. It could therefore be assumed that CBS was a means of exploring his previous research interests further, whilst at the same time providing him with an important opportunity to engage with some of Sheffield's most vulnerable individuals.

This is not, however, a criticism and is entirely understandable when we consider that CBS is a relatively new Biblical Studies methodology. I am amongst the

David J. Nixon, *Stories from the Street: A Theology of Homelessness* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2013).

⁹⁵² Ipsen, *Sex Working and the Bible*.

⁹⁵³ Ekblad, *Reading the Bible with the Damned*, "Journeying with Moses toward True Solidarity: Shifting Social and Narrative Locations of the Oppressed and Their Liberators in Exodus 2-3," in *Reading Other-Wise: Socially Engaged Biblical Scholars Reading with Their Local Communities*, ed. Gerald O. West (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), 87-102.

⁹⁵⁴ Lawrence, *The Word in Place*, "Contextual Bible Studies Resources on Place," *The Expository Times* 120/3 (2008): 131-132, "'On a Cliff's Edge': Actualizing Luke 8:22-39 in an Intentional Christian Community on the North Devon Coast," *The Expository Times* 119/3 (2007): 111-115, "Being 'Hefted': Reflections on Place, Stories and Contextual Bible Study," *The Expository Times* 118/11 (2007): 530-535.

⁹⁵⁵ At the time of writing, Strine has only just completed his CBS project with asylum seekers and forced migrants. However, details of this project can be found on his blog, see: Casey Strine, "Where have you come from? Where are you going?" *Musings from the Mind of Strine*, 2014, <http://caseystrine.com/where-have-you-come-from/>. He has also given conference papers on his project, see: Casey Strine, "How Involuntary Migration Shapes the Book of Genesis," Refugee Awareness Week 2016 Leeds, 23 June 2016, <http://refugeeweek.org.uk/events/involuntary-migration-shapes-book-genesis/>.

⁹⁵⁶ Buch-Hansen and Lorensen have also yet to publish on their recently completed "Consumed Identities: Ritualized Food and the Negotiation of National Identity in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark" research project which was completed in Copenhagen in affiliation with the University of Copenhagen and formed part of the larger research project "Reassembling Democracy: Ritual as Cultural Resource," which was funded by the Norwegian Research Council.

⁹⁵⁷ Chalcraft's "Development of Ethnographic Methods and Training for Comparative Contextual Biblical Interpretation" research project, which was completed in collaboration with Dexter Maben, Arren Bennet Lawrence, David Joy, and Reeva Kumar Ravela, uses a contextual biblical interpretation method that focuses on examining "biblical encounters." However, it has been heavily influenced by CBS. Again, this project has only just been completed, so no publications currently exist on Chalcraft's revision of CBS.

first generation of biblical scholars training exclusively in contextual biblical interpretation, therefore it can be expected that any extant biblical scholars would use CBS as an additional methodology as they already have their established research interests and training.

Finally, CBS has also been the focus of a small number of British PhD research projects, such as those conducted by David G. Ford⁹⁵⁸ (who “read with” secular men working in an industrial plant), Melody Briggs⁹⁵⁹ (who has used CBS with children), Helen John⁹⁶⁰ (who used contemporary contextual biblical interpretation methods to read the Bible with members of a Northern Namibian village), Ruth Helen Perrin⁹⁶¹ (who “read with” a group of young millennials), Naomi Lawson Jacobs⁹⁶² (who is using CBS to “read with” disabled Christians in Britain), and Joanne Logan⁹⁶³ (who is using CBS to “read with” women who attend churches in Northern England).⁹⁶⁴

⁹⁵⁸ See: David G. Ford, *Reading the Bible Outside the Church: A Case Study* (PhD diss., University of Chester, 2015).

⁹⁵⁹ See: Melody Briggs, *Interpreting Bible Stories with Children and Young Teens* (Cambridge: Grove Books, 2016), “Investigating Children’s Readings of Biblical Narrative,” paper presented at the 2011 annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature. San Francisco, CA, November 2011.

⁹⁶⁰ See: Helen John, *Bodies, Spirits, and the Living Landscape: Interpreting the Bible in Owamboland, Namibia* (PhD diss., University of Exeter, 2016).

⁹⁶¹ See: Ruth Helen Perrin, *The Bible Reading of Young Evangelicals: An Exploration of the Ordinary Hermeneutics and Faith of Generation Y* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2016).

⁹⁶² See: Naomi Lawson Jacobs, *Uncovering the Roof: Researching the Places where Disability, Religion and Society Meet*, 2017, <https://naomijacobs.wordpress.com/>.

⁹⁶³ See: Joanne Logan, “Annoyance, worry and guilt: learning from the emotions expressed by ‘ordinary’ women readers of Ephesians 21-33,” paper presented at the 2015 annual meeting of the European Association of Biblical Studies. Cordoba, Spain, 2015.

⁹⁶⁴ Because I am located in Britain, I have purposefully focused my examination of CBS’ usage in Europe, as well as other “Western” countries, such as North America. This does not mean that CBS is not being used elsewhere, as it has also been adopted by scholars working in a number of other post-colonial contexts. For example, Nancy Tan has used CBS to “read with” sex workers in Hong Kong. See: Nancy Tan and Lai Kwan Hui, “Hong Kong Sex Workers: Mothers Reading 1 Kings 3.16–28,” paper presented at the 2014 International Congress of Ethnic Chinese Biblical Scholars Annual Conference. Hong Kong, 19 August 2014. It would, however, be impossible for one thesis to examine how CBS has been used across the globe.

The Method of Contextual Bible Study

Before I describe the ideological and methodological principals that are central to CBS, I will first describe its practicalities. Firstly, I wish to distinguish between a CBS session and a CBS programme: a session is a one-off, stand-alone meeting, whereas a programme is a string of sessions that are attended by the same group of people to either repeatedly focus on one theme or to read a series of different biblical texts. My project is therefore a programme. Each CBS session typically comprises of a CBS facilitator (who can be either a lay person or a trained academic) "reading with" a group of "ordinary" readers. The "reader" portion of "ordinary" reader should not be understood as solely referring to the act of reading, as it includes those "readers" who are illiterate or visually impaired. The term therefore encompasses all ways of encountering biblical texts.

The term "ordinary" reader was coined by West and has both a "general" and "specific" definition. It is used generally to refer to "all readers who read the Bible *pre-critically*."⁹⁶⁵ Whilst "pre-critical" is a fluid term that can be used to refer to a number of styles of reading and to identify a number of readers, I understand "pre-critical" to mean readers who do not self-identify as having training or qualifications in reading and interpreting biblical texts such as those who do not identify as having any in-depth knowledge of the socio-historical context of biblical texts or the languages in which such texts were originally written. I also explicitly advocate a non-hierarchical understanding of "critical" and "pre-critical" readings.

The specific way in which "ordinary" readers are defined, which is overtly stated by West and the Ujamaa Centre as taking "precedence over the general,"⁹⁶⁶ refers to a reader's socio-political and economic context. This description asserts that the "ordinary" reader is "poor and marginalized."⁹⁶⁷ The emphasis placed on

⁹⁶⁵ West, *The Academy of the Poor*, 10.

⁹⁶⁶ West, *The Academy of the Poor*, 10.

⁹⁶⁷ West, *The Academy of the Poor*, 10.

the specific definition of the “ordinary” reader has similarly been embraced by almost all other CBS practitioners. For example, Andrew Curtis, when working in Sydney, Australia, with a group of “ordinary” readers (in this case, transsexual prostitutes) to contextually read Matthew 21:31-32, notes that his usage of the term “ordinary” can be defined thus: “I use the term “ordinary” here to refer to generally non-trained, non-professional readers of the Bible, who are marginalised and/or disadvantaged either in a social or ecclesiological sense.”⁹⁶⁸ The forging of this link between “marginalisation” and “ordinary” when defining the “ordinary” reader can be found in all uses of CBS.

Because of this, certain groups continually appear in CBS literature, all of which are referred to as “marginalised.” For example, CBS is most commonly used to “read with” prisoners, gang members, the poor, the unemployed, homeless and vulnerably housed individuals, and sex workers. If West and the Ujamaa Centre had not emphasised that the specific definition of “ordinary” readers takes precedence over all other definitions and that if the contextual nature of CBS was more readily recognised, then those who have later come to use CBS may not have also sought to define “ordinary” readers in the same manner.

If we consider extant CBS literature, it is clear that there exists an overt drive to “read with” “marginalised” readers. For example, Kune Biezeveld⁹⁶⁹ asserts that “[a] possible way to experience this ‘break through’ [in reference to leaning how others experience God] could well be to be confronted by voices from outside our own western contextuality.”⁹⁷⁰ Biezeveld goes on to quote West by arguing that “Biblical Studies and trained readers need ‘the other’, particularly those ‘others’ from the margins, in our own readings of the Bible.”⁹⁷¹ Whilst I do not doubt

⁹⁶⁸ Andrew Curtis, “An Encounter with Ordinary Real Readers Reading the Gospels: Implications for Mission,” in *To Cast Fire upon the Earth: Bible and Mission Collaborating in Today’s Multicultural Context*, ed. Teresa Okure (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2000), 126-147 (128).

⁹⁶⁹ Whilst Biezeveld has predominantly worked within the field of feminist criticism, she was one of the scholars involved in the Stellenbosch conference in 2006, which resulted in the publication of the edited volume *African and European Readers of the Bible in Dialogue*.

⁹⁷⁰ Kune Biezeveld, “The Role of ‘The Other’ in the Reading of the Bible: Towards a New Roadmap for Bible Reading in the Western World,” in *African and European Readers of the Bible in Dialogue: In Quest of a Shared Meaning*, eds. Hans De Wit and Gerald O. West (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 123-139 (125).

⁹⁷¹ Biezeveld, “The Role of ‘The Other’ in the Reading of the Bible,” 134.

Biezeveld's good intentions, her comments demonstrate how CBS is dominated by the desire to "read with" the "other" and the "marginalised."⁹⁷²

I am therefore concerned that if we continue to fail to recognise the contextual origins of CBS and how this has shaped its methods, terminology, and ideology, then not only will the scope and potential of CBS remain extremely limited as many "ordinary" readers are immediately excluded from the process if they cannot be deemed "marginalised," but the very act of making this "marginalisation" criteria the heart of CBS (regardless of context) runs the risk of developing CBS programmes that are methodologically and ideologically flawed, as well as being potentially inappropriate, irrelevant, ineffective, and even harmful.

One of the purposes of this project is therefore to highlight how the specific definition of "ordinary" readers should be understood solely as a product of CBS' South African origins and that once it is removed from the post-colonial and post-Apartheid context of South Africa it becomes deeply problematic.⁹⁷³ By grounding CBS in ethnography, CBS practitioners are better equipped to contextualise the methodology and discourse of CBS, as well as those they are "reading with."

West and the Ujamaa Centre also consider "reading with" "privileged" "ordinary" readers. However, they only consider this briefly and encourage it only as a means of sharing with such individuals the readings produced by "marginalised" readers. For example, they state:

Contextual Bible Study can, of course, also be done with more privileged sectors of society, but in such cases one of the roles of the facilitator is to remind those who are more privileged of the realities of the poor, working-class, and marginalised. This can easily be done by sharing with

⁹⁷² The volume in which this article features records the dialogue that occurred at an international conference which was attended by African and European scholars. Interestingly, when the paper upon which this article is based was presented, it received great criticism from the African scholars in attendance, primarily for the views expressed within it about what "ordinary" readers Western Biblical Studies scholars should focus upon "reading with" and the problematic nature of Biezeveld's emphasis on the other. See: Hans Snoek, "Key Concepts in the Dialogue between African and European Biblical Scholars," 101.

⁹⁷³ In this project, the term "marginalisation" was debated quite fervently at the beginning of the CBS programme, as I described the coal miners as "privileged" (in reference to their gender, ethnicity, and wealth), however, owing to their class and diminishing culture, the group instead saw themselves as distinctly "marginalised." Such a debate highlights the problematic nature of non-contextualised, blanket descriptions.

the more privileged group the kinds of contextual readings that have emerged from less privileged sectors of society.⁹⁷⁴

In addition to the presence of “ordinary” readers, a facilitator is also necessary for the smooth running of a CBS programme. Whilst it is not overtly expressed that a facilitator should be a recognised Biblical Studies expert (for example, a priest or a biblical scholar), it can be assumed that the facilitator should have enough knowledge (of both the Bible and the context of the “ordinary” readers) to manage the many requirements of a CBS programme and to understand and answer any questions asked. For example, West and the Ujamaa Centre state that “[t]o be the facilitator of a Contextual Bible Study, you do not have to have a qualification; facilitation is for ordinary Christians! Anyone is welcome to organise and facilitate the studies in this Manual.”⁹⁷⁵

The role of the facilitator is defined thus:

Key to Contextual Bible Study is the role of the facilitator. Contextual Bible Study is a collaborative process and therefore requires a form of **leadership that facilitates**. We are all familiar with dominating forms of leadership. These styles of leadership are inappropriate for Contextual Bible Study. The leader must be a facilitator.

Facilitation is more than a technique; it is **an art and a form of spirituality!**

The primary role of the facilitator is to assist the overall purpose of Contextual Bible Study, namely **group collaboration**. Therefore, the facilitator needs to be someone who enables the group to work together collaboratively, sharing their resources and moving to some common action.⁹⁷⁶

In addition, West and the Ujamaa Centre offer seventeen “tips” for facilitation, ranging from understanding the contextual realities of the group participating in the CBS session, to managing potential conflict,⁹⁷⁷ as well as six pieces of practical advice for organising CBS sessions, such as selecting an

⁹⁷⁴ West and the Ujamaa Centre, *Doing Contextual Bible Study*, 18.

⁹⁷⁵ West and the Ujamaa Centre, *Doing Contextual Bible Study*, 13.

⁹⁷⁶ West and the Ujamaa Centre, *Doing Contextual Bible Study*, 13. Bold is their own.

⁹⁷⁷ West and the Ujamaa Centre, *Doing Contextual Bible Study*, 13-15.

appropriate venue and ensuring that everyone participating has an appropriate copy of the text being read.⁹⁷⁸

Furthermore, whilst it is not advocated that it is essential for a facilitator to be from the same contextual or cultural background as the readers that they are “reading with,” it is implied that it is more appropriate and beneficial for this to be the case. For example, in the opening of West and the Ujamaa Centre’s manual, they repeatedly emphasise that the Ujamaa Centre employs many members of staff who are originally from the same contexts of those that the centre seeks to “read with.”⁹⁷⁹ Dube is also a proponent of the facilitator having a shared social location with those they “read with.” Dube demonstrates this idea by drawing upon her own upbringing as a Motswana woman in South Africa in relation to both her position as a professional biblical scholar and her relationship to “ordinary” women readers of the Bible in South Africa. Dube’s emphasis on “decolonising” the Bible for female African readers and her passion for *Talitha Cum* hermeneutics is demonstrative of her stance with regard to the facilitator and the participants having a shared context.⁹⁸⁰

However, as is evident from the way in which CBS has been used in contexts external to South Africa, it is not widely the case that facilitators are from the same cultural background as CBS participants. This is also true of West, as whilst he is South African, he is also distinctly ‘other’ to the predominantly poor, black South Africa women he “reads with.”

This has resulted in some relatively scathing analyses of his work. For example, Gloria K. Plaatjie suggests that West should be considered an

⁹⁷⁸ West and the Ujamaa Centre, *Doing Contextual Bible Study*, 15-16.

⁹⁷⁹ West and the Ujamaa Centre, *Doing Contextual Bible Study*, 3. However, this is in direct contrast to the original commitments first laid out by West, as he originally emphasised reading the Bible with those that are different or other from ourselves. For example, see: West, *Contextual Bible Study*, 12.

⁹⁸⁰ For more on this, see: Musa W. Dube, “*Talitha Cum* Hermeneutics of Liberation: Some African Women’s Ways of Reading the Bible,” in *Postcolonial Perspectives in African Biblical Interpretation*, eds. Musa W. Dube, Andrew M. Mbuvi, and Dora R. Mbuwayesango (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012), 29-42, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible* (St Louis: Chalice Press, 2000). Similar emphasises are expressed by all members of the *Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians* (of which Dube is a member). However, as Dube is a professional biblical scholar, she is still ‘other’ to those that she “reads with” even if she is more of an insider than West.

“anthropologist”⁹⁸¹ (not a socially-engaged biblical scholar) as his own context is so different to those he works with. Quoting Fernando F. Segovia,⁹⁸² Plaatjie argues that West’s “approach, while recognized for its empathy and intentions of solidarity, risks being seen as anthropological, or as a white man doing what other white males have always done – namely, writing about and becoming an authority on black people.”⁹⁸³ Similar criticisms are also made by Tinyiko S. Maluleke, who also questions West’s role as a white man working with predominantly black female readers. In particular, Maluleke contends that there is a very real danger that contextual interpretations can become detached from the environments in which they have been produced and the lived and embodied realities of those that produced them because of the disconnect between the facilitator and “ordinary” readers. CBS may therefore run the risk of becoming “merely academic.”⁹⁸⁴ Maluleke cites West as a potential example of this.

Whilst West has been repeatedly called upon to account for and justify his positionality, he is acutely aware of the fundamental difference that exists between himself and the people with whom he reads. West openly and candidly talks about how “[w]hite, middle-class males are groomed for greatness, particularly in the apartheid past of South Africa.”⁹⁸⁵ Through his unabashed open acknowledgement of his own context in relation to the contexts of those he “reads with,” West has sought to utilise his problematic positionality positively by enabling others to “make use of”⁹⁸⁶ his privileged status by using him as a tool to gain access to institutions and resources “marginalised” individuals would normally be denied.

As I am proposing that CBS should be grounded in ethnography, it is therefore acceptable for a facilitator to be from a different background to those

⁹⁸¹ See: Gloria K. Plaatjie, “Toward a Post-Apartheid Black Feminist Reading of the Bible: A Case of Luke 2:36-38,” in *Other Ways of Reading: African Women and the Bible*, ed. Musa W. Dube (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature; Geneva: WCC Publications, 2001), 114-142 (118).

⁹⁸² Fernando F. Segovia, “Reading Across: Intercultural Criticism and Textual Posture,” in *Interpreting Beyond Borders: The Bible and Postcolonialism*, ed. Fernando F. Segovia (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 59-83 (68-72).

⁹⁸³ Plaatjie, “Toward a Post-Apartheid Black Feminist Reading of the Bible,” 118.

⁹⁸⁴ Tinyiko Maluleke, “The Bible Among African Christians: A Missiological Perspective,” in *To Cast Fire upon the Earth: Bible and Mission Collaborating in Today’s Multicultural Context*, ed. Teresa Okure (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2000), 87-112 (93).

⁹⁸⁵ West, *The Academy of the Poor*, 36-37.

⁹⁸⁶ West, *The Academy of the Poor*, 36-37.

they “read with,” so long as they are acutely aware of any difference that may exist between themselves and those they are facilitating by actively reflecting upon this reality and attempting as best they can to experience and understand the contexts of those to whom they are different. Considering the positionality of the facilitator in relation to the “ordinary” reader therefore becomes part of the “praxis” reflexivity of CBS.

During a CBS session, the facilitator and the “ordinary” readers undertake a collaborative reading process known as “reading with.” The preposition “with” is used here to emphasise the non-hierarchical nature of the process. For example, the facilitator is “reading with” the “ordinary” readers just the same as the “ordinary” readers are “reading with” the facilitator. “With” is therefore used to symbolise the coming together of different people from different contexts in a space that stresses equality and mutual respect. Ultimately, CBS “is a collaborative process.”⁹⁸⁷

CBS therefore distinguishes itself from other contextual biblical interpretation methods that may “read for,” “read as,” and “read on behalf of”—all of which exist as distinct Biblical Studies traditions. For example, the practice of reading through the lens of a certain culture or context to begin the process of reclaiming and reappropriating biblical texts has become increasingly common within the field of Biblical Studies, as it can be found in a great deal of post-colonial and minority criticism.⁹⁸⁸

⁹⁸⁷ See: West and the Ujamaa Centre, *Doing Contextual Bible Study*, 12-13.

⁹⁸⁸ For examples of such approaches, see: Randall C. Bailey, Tat-Siong Benny Liew, and Fernando F. Segovia, *They Were All Together in One Place? Toward Minority Biblical Criticism* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009); Roland Boer and Fernando F. Segovia, eds., *The Future of the Biblical Past: Envisioning Biblical Studies on a Global Key* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012); Musa W. Dube, Andrew M. Mbuvi, and Dora R. Mbuwayesango, eds., *Postcolonial Perspectives in African Biblical Scholarship* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012); Jione Havea, David J. Neville, and Elaine M. Wainwright, eds., *Bible, Borders, and Belonging(s): Engaging Readings from Oceania* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2014); Tat-Siong Benny Liew, *What is Asian-American Biblical Hermeneutics? Reading the New Testament* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2008); Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, ed., *Text and Experience: Towards a Cultural Exegesis of the Bible* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996); Sugirtharajah, ed., *The Bible and the Third World; Asian Biblical Hermeneutics and Postcolonialism: Contesting the Interpretations* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1998). Also, see many of the chapters within: Sugirtharajah, ed., *Voices from the Margin* and Daniel Patte, ed., *Global Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2004). However, whilst many of these works combine various methods for producing a contextual reading or hermeneutic, it is the explicit intention of CBS to seek to ask readers from such contexts to read and interpret the texts in light of their context their selves.

When it comes to the ideology of CBS, central to West and the Ujamaa Centre’s model is the notion of “praxis,”⁹⁸⁹ which is described as being a constant “cycle of action and reflection.”⁹⁹⁰ By adopting a working practice centred upon “praxis,” a CBS practitioner is able to build time for reflection into their CBS programme, thus ensuring that all aspects of the programme are thoroughly considered and made as relevant and positively effective as possible for those they are “reading with.” By doing this, a specific CBS programme, as well as the overall CBS methodology are continuously revised and modified in response to what is happening in the field. It is this overt emphasis on “praxis” that has encouraged me to utilise reflexivity, to pursue grounding CBS in ethnography, and to question why the contextual nature of CBS has not yet been acknowledged.

West and the Ujamaa Centre also emphasise “learning by doing”⁹⁹¹ and encourage manual users to “make these Bible studies your own, be flexible in your use of them, adapt them for your own context, and construct others like these that will also meet the needs of your context.”⁹⁹² The flexibility of CBS is similarly stressed when West and the Ujamaa Centre state the following:

The methods used here come from our understanding of our context, and as you proceed through this Manual you will have to decide whether these methods are of use to your context or not. Contextual Bible Study is a **methodology** – a way of working, rather than a fixed formula.⁹⁹³

Therefore, whilst CBS is a distinct methodology, it is also flexible, readily adaptable to the field, and in need of conscious and continuous contextualisation. Whilst “praxis” is central to the overall ideology and methodology of CBS, the actual Bible reading process that forms the core of CBS and takes place during a CBS session between facilitators and “ordinary” readers is described as being a “See-

⁹⁸⁹ West and the Ujamaa Centre, *Doing Contextual Bible Study*, 3.

⁹⁹⁰ West and the Ujamaa Centre, *Doing Contextual Bible Study*, 3.

⁹⁹¹ West and the Ujamaa Centre, *Doing Contextual Bible Study*, 3.

⁹⁹² West and the Ujamaa Centre, *Doing Contextual Bible Study*, 3.

⁹⁹³ West and the Ujamaa Centre, *Doing Contextual Bible Study*, 3.

Judge-Act”⁹⁹⁴ method, which “was developed by Fr. Joseph Cardijn in the 1930s in Belgium, where he was working as a chaplain among factory workers.”⁹⁹⁵ Essential to the “See-Judge-Act” model is the commitment that “the Bible study process begins with analysis of the local context (See), and then re-reads the Bible to allow the biblical text to speak to the context (Judge), and then moves to action as we respond to what God is saying (Act).”⁹⁹⁶ This process is known as the “CBS sandwich” as it both begins and ends with the context of the “ordinary” readers.⁹⁹⁷ Readers are thus encouraged to read in “front-of-the-text,” “on-the-text,” and “behind-the-text.”⁹⁹⁸ CBS’ focus on context derives from its driving principal that “Contextual Bible Study should make a difference in the public realm!”⁹⁹⁹ Thus, transformation (of many kinds and on many levels) is the underlying goal of CBS, hence the reason the process ends with an “Act” phrase, as it is at this point that transformation should occur.

Each step of the “See-Judge-Act” method of CBS is further explained by West and the Ujamaa Centre with the following:

First, Contextual Bible Study is always situated within the social analysis and needs of particular communities of the poor, the working-class, and marginalised. It is their perspective on reality that shapes the whole Bible study. Second, Contextual Bible study provides a way of doing theological analysis, “reading the signs of the times”. The Bible is read carefully and closely in order to hear its distinct voice within its own literary and socio-historical context, thereby providing a theological resource from which to reflect on and engage with our social analysis. And third, Contextual Bible always ends with theological resources provided by the Bible study to plan for social transformation.¹⁰⁰⁰

⁹⁹⁴ This tri-part method of CBS is highlighted by the manual as being different to the method used by CEBI, who have the additional “celebrate” and “evaluate” stages. See: West and Ujamaa Centre, *Doing Contextual Bible Study*, 4.

⁹⁹⁵ West and the Ujamaa Centre, *Doing Contextual Bible Study*, 26.

⁹⁹⁶ West and the Ujamaa Centre, *Doing Contextual Bible Study*, 4.

⁹⁹⁷ West and the Ujamaa Centre, *Doing Contextual Bible Study*, 4.

⁹⁹⁸ West and the Ujamaa Centre, *Doing Contextual Bible Study*, 9.

⁹⁹⁹ West and the Ujamaa Centre, *Doing Contextual Bible Study*, 12.

¹⁰⁰⁰ West and the Ujamaa Centre, *Doing Contextual Bible Study*, 4.

In order to move through the three stages of CBS, West and the Ujamaa Centre devised five steps that move participants from one stage to the next. These five steps similarly begin and end with context.¹⁰⁰¹ These steps are:

1. Identifying a theme (See);
2. Discerning a biblical text (Judge);
3. Formulating questions (Analysing and linking text and context);
4. Articulating and owning (Making the Bible study our own);
5. Developing a plan of action (Act).¹⁰⁰²

In addition to making clear the three-stage, five-step process of CBS, West and the Ujamaa Centre’s manual also outlines the four basic commitments of CBS:¹⁰⁰³

1. A commitment to read the Bible from the perspective of the poor, working-class, and marginalised;
2. A commitment to read the Bible collaboratively;
3. A commitment to read the Bible critically, using the critical resources of both biblical scholarship and local reading communities;
4. A commitment to read the Bible for individual and social transformation.¹⁰⁰⁴

These commitments can similarly be understood as the four “C’s” of CBS: “Context, Community, Criticality, and Change.”¹⁰⁰⁵ Whilst it is not explicitly stated that these four commitments should be the only commitments of CBS, the very fact

¹⁰⁰¹ It is this emphasis on CBS being comprised of three stages and five steps that distinguishes this method of contextually reading the Bible from other forms of contextual biblical interpretation.

¹⁰⁰² West and the Ujamaa Centre, *Doing Contextual Bible Study*, 8-12.

¹⁰⁰³ These four commitments differ from the original four commitments emphasised by West in his first publications on CBS which are as follows: “1. A commitment to read the Bible from the perspective of the South African context, particularly from the perspective of the poor and oppressed. 2. A commitment to read the Bible in community with others, particularly with those from contexts different to our own. 3. A commitment to read the Bible critically. 4. A commitment to individual and social transformation through contextual Bible study.” West, *Contextual Bible Study*, 12. In addition to this, since the publication of *Contextual Bible Study*, West and the Ujamaa Centre have started spelling CBS with capital letters.

¹⁰⁰⁴ West and the Ujamaa Centre, *Doing Contextual Bible Study*, 7.

¹⁰⁰⁵ West and the Ujamaa Centre, *Doing Contextual Bible Study*, 7. Sarojini Nadar has reflected extensively on the commitments of CBS, see: Sarojini Nadar, “Beyond the “Ordinary Reader” and the “Invisible Intellectual”: Pushing the Boundaries of Contextual Bible Study Discourse,” in *The Future of the Biblical Past: Envisioning Biblical Studies on a Global Key*, eds. Roland Boer and Fernando F. Segovia (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012), 13-28.

that they are included alongside the methodological description of CBS carries the implication that they lie at the core of CBS. Whilst I do not wish to dispute their positive intentions, I am, however, concerned about the implications of embedding a method of biblical interpretation in a specific ideological framework. This is not because I wish to negate the importance of socially-engaged scholarship, but because I am concerned that these specific commitments limit the scope and potential of CBS as they place limitations on which “ordinary” readers can participate in the process.

In addition, West and the Ujamaa Centre make it overtly clear that they understand CBS to be a religious process. For example, whilst West and the Ujamaa Centre state the following about their CBS manual:

The studies in this Manual are for anyone to use. The facilitator of one of these Contextual Bible Studies does not need to be a trained person with a theological background. Nor do they need to be ordained clergy (or a minister). These particular studies are for any and every one who wants to read and understand their own experiences and context in the light of the Bible. They have been designed in a way that incorporates the resources of socially engaged biblical scholarship...¹⁰⁰⁶

When we consider later statements, it is evident that “anyone” in fact refers to “anyone that is Christian.” For example, they describe the facilitator role in the following manner: “[t]o be the facilitator of a Contextual Bible Study, you do not have to have a qualification; facilitation is for ordinary Christians!”¹⁰⁰⁷ and “facilitation is a ‘spirituality’ that recognises the image and voice of God in everyone.”¹⁰⁰⁸ Similarly, they describe the process of CBS as being “spiritual”¹⁰⁰⁹ and overtly state that “Contextual Bible Study is an act of faith.”¹⁰¹⁰

Again, this focus on religion and spirituality is a product of CBS’ South African origin. And again, it is an aspect of CBS that has been either unquestionably applied or by-passed without acknowledgment by many CBS practitioners. How

¹⁰⁰⁶ West and the Ujamaa Centre, *Doing Contextual Bible Study*, 5.

¹⁰⁰⁷ West and the Ujamaa Centre, *Doing Contextual Bible Study*, 13.

¹⁰⁰⁸ West and the Ujamaa Centre, *Doing Contextual Bible Study*, 13.

¹⁰⁰⁹ West and the Ujamaa Centre, *Doing Contextual Bible Study*, 15.

¹⁰¹⁰ West and the Ujamaa Centre, *Doing Contextual Bible Study*, 19.

Riches and his colleagues established CBS in Scotland is demonstrative of this. However, it is significant as it further limits the potential of CBS as it makes implementing CBS in a non-Christian setting problematic.

To bring my explanation of the method of CBS to a close, I will focus upon an example of CBS in action. One of the most celebrated and impactful examples of CBS is the Tamar Campaign, which was initially launched by West and the Ujamaa Centre in 2000 in South Africa. Owing to its success, it has now been taken over by FECCLAHA and has spread across a number of countries in Eastern Africa. The Tamar Campaign uses the rape of Tamar narrative as the textual backbone for the fight against sexual gender-based violence in Africa.¹⁰¹¹

It is a grassroots movement that encourages communities across Africa to come together and read the rape of Tamar narrative (and similar biblical texts) in light of the tragic and dangerous contextual realities of sexual gender-based violence and to then use the subsequent reflections as the impetus for challenging significant institutions (such as the Church, police, and local governments) to better support victims of such violence and to do more to condemn and punish perpetrators. In addition, the campaign also seeks to give victims of such violence counselling and a safe space in which they can share their experiences with other victims, with the hope of finding healing.¹⁰¹²

One of the outputs of the campaign has been the production of a CBS manual specifically focused upon conducting CBS programmes tackling the issue of sexual gender-based violence.¹⁰¹³ In addition to the manual, various academic reflections upon the campaign have also been produced.¹⁰¹⁴

¹⁰¹¹ For more details on the Tamar Campaign, see: FECCLAHA, “Tamar Campaign and Sexual Gender Based Violence,” unknown, http://www.fecclaha.org/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=57:tamar-campaign-and-sexual-gender-based-violence&Itemid=202.

¹⁰¹² This demonstrates how the transformational “Act” phrase of CBS can be anything from community-wide transformation to individual therapeutic transformation.

¹⁰¹³ Fred Nyabera and Taryn Montgomery, eds., *Contextual Bible Study Manual on Gender-Based Violence: Tamar Campaign* (Nairobi: FECCLAHA, 2007). <http://www.missioncouncil.se/wp/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/GBV-Tamar-Campaign-Contextual-Bible-Study-Manual-English-Version.pdf>.

¹⁰¹⁴ For example, see: Gerald O. West, “The Contribution of Tamar’s Story to the Construction of Alternative African Masculinities,” in *Bodies, Embodiment, and Theology of the Hebrew Bible*, eds. S. Tamar Kamionkowski and Wonil Kim (London: T & T Clark, 2010), 184-200;

Ultimately, CBS can be described as “a method that encourages readers to read the Bible in ways appropriate to their own contexts and which allow them to engage in dialogue with one another to address current concerns in light of biblical texts.”¹⁰¹⁵ It is therefore a socially-engaged exegetical method that seeks to read the Bible in a manner that allows for a connection to be forged between text and context during which the Bible is used as a platform upon which transformation can be launched.

West and Zonde-Mabizela, “The Bible Story that became a Campaign”; West, et al., “Rape in the House of David.”

¹⁰¹⁵ Riches, et al., *What is Contextual Bible Study?* 3.

CHAPTER SIX. PUTTING THEORY INTO PRACTICE II: READING THE BIBLE WITH SOUTH DERBYSHIRE COAL MINERS

How I Ended up with too much Data and what I did with it

As I began my research at a time when instability dominated the social world I was studying, it was necessary for my research to be structured and conducted in a manner that acknowledged this. I therefore devised a research strategy that could not only be revised and altered at a moment's notice, but which also made the most of the limited time and resources I had. One of the most significant ways these circumstances shaped my research was the manner in which I collected the data needed for the CBS portion of my project. As I had experienced early on how the unpredictability of the circumstances could negatively impact my research, I became paranoid about being unable to generate enough data to successfully complete this project and determined that I needed to safeguard against this eventuality by putting into place what I now realise to be an excessive number of data collection processes:

1. I devised a lengthy CBS programme, which covered twelve texts;
2. I audio-recorded each session (which I later transcribed);
3. After each session, I recorded my observations and reflections in a field diary;
4. I collected all the “homeworks” at the end of each session;
5. I implemented the task of creating an “exegetical map” for each session;

6. I collected a large amount of additional data about each coal miner throughout the duration of the CBS programme;
7. I created the role of a control contributor (Mr Blue), so that I could compare interpretations produced by an individual to those produced by the group;
8. I took every opportunity I could to enhance the depth and quality of my research by conducting and participating in complimentary research projects. For example, I took part in the “Image Speaks: Photographing Research” public engagement project, which I used to further develop the group’s reading of Jeremiah 18:1-12.

By undertaking those tasks, I unwittingly made my project more difficult, as these processes led to the production of twelve group readings, twelve individual essays, sixty pieces of “homework,” and twelve “exegetical maps”; a fear of not having enough data led to the production of far too much.

When it came to the writing-up stage of my research, I found myself having to make tough decisions about what data I could actually include in my final thesis, as analysing all the data I had generated would have been impossible. I determined that analysing the coal miners’ readings thematically was the most appropriate and effective means of assessing the Herculean amount of exegetical data I had generated. One of the primary reasons for this decision was to avoid repetition. For example, as each of the readings featured detailed reflections upon the issues of power and control, this thesis would have been highly repetitious if I were to examine how the coal miners read each text as this would require examining the themes of power and control twelve times. Analysing the readings thematically also allowed me to ensure that the most dominant contextual reflections of the coal miners were analysed in as much depth as possible and that the contextual nuances of such interpretations were not glossed over, but were instead brought to the fore and rooted in the lived and embodied realities of the coal miners, their most pressing concerns, and the tragic events that were unfolding before my eyes.

What follows, then, is an unpacking of what was without doubt the most dominant and powerful trope of the CBS sessions: the interconnected themes of

power, an “Us versus Them” mentality, mass involuntary redundancy, and collective trauma.

Power, an “Us versus Them” Mentality, Mass Involuntary Redundancy, and Collective Trauma

The motif that came to dominate every CBS session (and thus every reading produced by the coal miners), as well as every additional discussion that was had throughout the duration of the project, was that of power, or more precisely, the impact that the abuse or corruption of power has upon both individuals and collectives—particularly those that do not have power—and the struggle for power that has not only perpetually existed within the coal-mining industry between the workforce and coal-mining companies¹⁰¹⁶ (as well as between coal-mining unions and the British government), but also between the masses and ruling powers.

The coal miners reflected upon power in a large variety of different ways in the sessions, with particular emphasis being placed upon how power is experienced, perceived, impacts, informs, and shapes both the lives of those in power and those without power. For example, in every text we read the coal miners invariably sought to identify and isolate what role power played in the narrative, what sort of power was being exercised, to whom this power belonged, and which groups were being oppressed by it. The group developed a reading strategy that focused upon determining the following:

¹⁰¹⁶ Whilst I cannot conceal which coal-mining company these men were employed by (as there is only one such large company left that owns deep-coal collieries), I wish to make it explicit that the coal miners’ reflections upon “the company” were not aimed at one specific company, but were aimed at all companies that have played a role in the coal-mining industry of Britain. Therefore, whilst the coal miners’ experiences of specific companies will have undoubtedly shaped the opinions, reflections, and worldviews that are present within their contextual biblical interpretations, it must be made clear that they are demonstrative of the entire history of coal mining in Britain and that they are influenced by the centuries old tradition of the coal-mining workforce positioning themselves at odds with their employing companies and, by extension, upon any authoritative bodies that hold power over the masses.

1. Who in the narrative had power and how they came by this power;
2. Who in the narrative is without power and how they came to be without it;
3. How power corrupts those that have it;
4. How revolution is often needed for the redistribution of power;
5. How the relationship between power and fear is portrayed within the narrative and how those that have power often only remain in such positions by instilling fear into those that do not;
6. How the nature of power can/should be understood;
7. How those that find themselves in positions of power because of democracy invariably betray those that elected them.

If we consider this reading strategy in light of my ethnographic findings, its prominence should come as no surprise. The focus of the coal miners’ contextual biblical interpretations on the topic of power is thus a direct product and manifestation of their experiences of the British coal-mining industry, which has been defined by a never-ending power struggle between coal-mining companies and coal miners and coal-mining unions and the government. In addition, the overall negative tone of the readings the coal miners produced is a product of the timing of this project, as the past five years have seen the British coal-mining industry become engulfed, eclipsed, and enshrined by a series of catastrophic events.

The group’s interrogation of power can, however, be broken down into a further eight sub-themes:

1. The relationship between fear and power;
2. The corruption of power;
3. Power and betrayal;
4. Power and authority;
5. Politics and power;¹⁰¹⁷

¹⁰¹⁷ With a particularly strong focus upon the Conservative Party and Thatcher.

6. Unions and power;¹⁰¹⁸
7. The power of management/owners and the lack of power of employees;
8. Male camaraderie and the collective power this can create.

These sub-themes define the mode of reading used by the coal miners during the CBS programme – a mode of reading which encapsulates, demonstrates, and articulates their unique view of power and authority. In addition to this, it also demonstrates the extent of the collective trauma they have suffered, which is a direct result of mass involuntary redundancy and the demise of Britain’s coal-mining industry, at the root of which lies the perceived corrupt and betraying actions of the primary authority figures in the coal miners’ lives. Even when we read passages that have generally been understood to be positive in nature (such as Acts 4:32-37), the coal miners still read and interpreted such texts negatively and in a manner that sought to reflect upon the perceived injustice occurring within the passage.

The following quotations taken from the coal miners’ “homeworks” demonstrate these eight sub-themes:

- Revelation 20:1-15 – “Tory Gov [versus] Old Miners” (Mr Black);
- Acts 5:1-11 – “This passages makes me think of union leaders etc. who were supposed to be distributing aid money to strikers + were reputed to be keeping most of it for themselves. This includes food, fuel, as well. So the strikers didn’t get everything they were due to – because of greed from above” (Mr Brown); “The rotten apples in the union. Some union leaders stole money from the union that was entrusted to them to administer for others in the union. These people were taken to court and prosecuted and ostracized. This prevented other people doing the same” (Mr Purple);
- Genesis 11:1-9 – “Torries said we had to much power” (Mr Black);
- Ephesians 1:3-14 – “A better life with no pain. We was promised a good way of life?” and “We was used for the Union purpose” (Mr Black);

¹⁰¹⁸ The NUM, rather than the UDM, was the focus here.

- Malachi 2:10-16 – “Power corrupts whether in a union or government” (Mr Black);
- Proverbs 18:1-24 – “Politicians only interested in themselves, not part of a team” (Mr Brown);
- Genesis 11:1-9 - “God = management or Thatcher” (Mr Green);
- Proverbs 18:1-24 – “Not part of team/disrupt things for the sake of it” and “power struggle” (Mr Green);
- Revelation 20:1-15 – “UK Coal battling the men + unions” and “petty under managers etc pathetic dictator of the company” (Mr Brown);
- Acts 4:32-37 and 5:1-11 – “Greed... would betray anyone to make money... looking after no 1” (Mr Green);
- Proverbs 18:1-24 - “I think there is great loyalty at the pit” (Mr Purple).

The coal miners were consistently able to “find”¹⁰¹⁹ examples of corruption, injustice, unfairness, the abuse of power, and the camaraderie that exists between those being dominated in all the passages we read. They invariably interpreted any authority figure present within a passage to be either corrupt or guilty of abusing their power and to be deliberately betraying or oppressing the powerless masses. The contextual parallels that they drew with every single example of authority or power present within the narratives (whether the authority figure in question was a human, such as a king or employer, or supernatural, such as God or Jesus) was always either Margaret Thatcher, the Conservative government (both that of the 1980s and today), Arthur Scargill, or coal-mining companies/owners/managers. Every time the coal miners “found” an unjust, corrupt, tyrannical, or abusive authority figure within the texts, they related it to one of these contextual figures. The following is a summative list of the contextual authority figures each narrative was interpreted as relating to:

¹⁰¹⁹ I am using “find” here to refer to the fact that I did not initially consider that some of the texts even featured figures of authority, for example, Proverbs 18:1-24. However, the coal miners still “found” an authority figure within such texts. In the Proverbs passage, the group used the text to discuss the nature of teamwork and the way in which some individuals are not team players because they want to be in-charge instead. Politicians were the group’s primary example of such people.

- Jeremiah – middle management (Jeremiah), management/company (God);
- Matthew – God or management/company (vineyard owner);
- Job – management/company (God);
- Revelation – management/company and Conservative government (both God and the Devil);
- Proverbs – politicians, Scargill, and management (no specific figure);
- Acts – union leaders (the apostles and Ananias and Sapphira), Conservatives (Satan), and management (God);
- Genesis – Thatcher/Conservatives/government/company (God);
- Ephesians – Scargill (God/Father) and Unions/NUM (Jesus);
- Genesis – dictatorships (God);
- Malachi – company/union/government (God);
- Corinthians – men (God);
- Peter – men (God).¹⁰²⁰

Whilst this negative interrogation of power and authority occurred in all of the coal miners’ readings, it was most evident when we read texts that contained characters that were overtly shown to be in positions of power or authority. The character that elicited the most vitriol, however, was that of God,¹⁰²¹ but more on this in a moment.

The coal miners’ mode of reading and their incessant focus upon the negative relationship between power and authority and the impact this has upon the oppressed masses is directly reflective of the “Us versus Them” mentality present within the coal-mining industry. In each reading and in each reflection upon power, a strong emphasis was always placed upon the negative relationship that

¹⁰²⁰ The Corinthians and Peter sessions focused upon the issues of sexism and misogyny in modern society, hence the reason they likened God to just “men” (as opposed to humanity) as they were seeking to emphasise the oppression and subjugation women have and do suffer at the hands of men.

¹⁰²¹ Throughout this thesis, God will be referred to as male in order to reflect the way in which the coal miners spoke about Him. Whilst I am aware of the need for inclusive language, in this instance, my presentation and analysis of the coal miners’ reading is benefited by mirroring the language that they used.

exists between those that reside on either side of the power spectrum, namely between those with power and those without. However, this negative relationship was always articulated in a manner that emphasised the fact that each party was purposefully pitting itself against the other and that each side saw themselves to be in a never-ending battle with the other for power and control. Again, if we consider this in light of my ethnographic findings, this should come as no surprise as this mentality dominates coal-mining.

As the final demise of this industry occurred whilst I was conducting my research, this group’s emphasis upon the nature, role, and impact of power—particularly their emphasis upon how quickly and easily power can corrupt/be corrupted—is also directly reflective of the collective trauma of mass involuntary redundancy, which was experienced by the coal miners as the result of the corruption of power. One of the most powerful comments made during the sessions about the trauma of mass involuntary redundancy was articulated by Mr Green when he poignantly stated: “People keep telling me that this is the real world. But it’s not.” This statement reveals the frustration and pain coal miners feel when non-coal miners inform coal miners who have recently been made redundant that the world they have now been thrust into is the “real world” and that it is somehow better for them to be joining everyone else in it. Such assertions imply that the social world and subsequent culture of coal miners is not real, which then denies the validity of a coal miner’s identity and worldview, both of which have been shaped by their employment.

To illustrate how the coal miners used the CBS programme to reflect upon this trauma, as well as their deep-rooted anxieties about authority and power, I will examine in depth two readings where these issues manifested themselves most prominently. The following will therefore be a detailed examination of the coal miners’ reading of Matthew 20:1-16 and Job 17:1-16.

Matthew 20:1-16: “I think it’s as though he’s trying to split the workforce up, I think. You know, get men against men” – Mr Green

To facilitate my examination of the group’s reading of Matthew 20:1-16,¹⁰²² I will divide my analysis into the following five sections:

1. God = vineyard owner = company;
2. More on “men against men”;
3. Injustice;
4. Human nature;
5. Employers need employees.

1. God = Vineyard Owner = Company

The coal miners’ reading of Matthew 20:1-16 saw the development of a complex and multi-layered parallel between the authority figures present within the passage and the authority figures present within their own context. For example, the coal miners determined that the vineyard owner within Matthew 20:1-16 was a metaphor for God, thus making the vineyard owner’s actions towards the men in the marketplace a metaphor for God’s relationship with creation. In addition to this, they also contextually paralleled the vineyard owner with the coal-mining industries’ companies. As became common within all of the coal miners’ readings, this parallel was drawn to highlight the negative qualities of both parties. In this instance, however, this parallel was also drawn to highlight some of the positive qualities of the vineyard owner in comparison to the negative qualities of coal-

¹⁰²² For the exegetical map produced during this session, see Appendix 13.

mining companies. For example, Mr Brown noted the following with regard to the relationship that is formed between the men in the marketplace and the vineyard owner:

General - The owner was impressed with the men that stood all day waiting for work + rewarded them accordingly. There was mutual trust with workers + the owner. - Difficult to compare with the pit - trust was not a big thing.

"General: - The owner was impressed with the men that stood all day waiting for work + rewarded them accordingly. There was mutual trust with workers + owner - difficult to compare with the pit - trust was not a big thing."

Similarly, Mr Purple stated "thank God for employers, without them we wouldn't have work."

However, what Mr Brown's comment highlights is the lack of trust that exists within their own vocational context in comparison to the environment in which the men from the marketplace work. Whilst this is a positive reflection upon the vineyard owner and his actions and characteristics, once he was likened to both God and coal-mining companies, he immediately became viewed in a negative manner. In other words, once their own context was brought into direct dialogue with the passage, their view of the authority figures present within the passage became skewed. Their now negative interpretation of the vineyard owner focused upon the type of employer he was and the way he employed people. For example, the coal miners argued that the vineyard owner had purposely designed and implemented an employment system that works against the workforce. This interpretation then dominated how the coal miners interpreted the overall meaning of the narrative. For example, Mr Red asserted, "I've got [the summary of

the passage] down as turning men against men," to which Mr Green replied "I've got that straight away! It is men against men."

Continuing their interpretation of the vineyard owner as a metaphor for God, the coal miners asserted that God also purposefully designed creation to work against humanity; he created rules that humanity would never be able to successfully abide by. God did this knowingly so that humanity would always fail and thus need constant punishment. God's ability to so wantonly and frequently punish humanity for their shortcomings has manifold significance for the balance of power, as it not only ensures humanity remains fearful of God, but also prevents humanity from ever challenging God. Thus, God is able to maintain his position of power without fear of ever being usurped. The group likened these two situations to the realities of their own context, where coal-mining companies have similarly designed a working environment that works against the workforce. This interpretation directly demonstrates the "Us versus Them" attitude of coal-mining culture and the negative relationship coal miners have long had with authority.

The group argued that the powerful individuals in positions of authority would want to implement such systems to ensure that they maintained their power and that the masses remained oppressed. This is readily achievable if the system in question not only has structures in place to maintain the current balance of power, but also functions in a manner that prevents those being oppressed and denied power from ever recognising their right to power or the collective power they hold. Consequently, any threat of unrest or revolt is rendered non-existent. By creating a system that both physically and psychologically traps the oppressed masses in a never-ending state of powerlessness, those in power do not have to fight to maintain their power as the system they have created maintains the balance for them as it continually reinscribes and reinforces the desired power structure.

The group proposed that this strategy was utilised to great effect in the coal-mining industry, as over time those in power had successfully curtailed the collective power of coal miners and their unions, which meant that their ability to instigate successful largescale collective protests (such as those that occurred prior to the Great Strike) was destroyed. It was noted that two specific strategies were particularly effective in this respect. The first was the arbitrary nature of the bonus

system. Coal miners were awarded a monetary bonus based upon how much coal their team cut during their shifts. In addition, not all members of each team would be eligible for such bonuses which were dependent upon the role each coal miner held and, as the result of a corrupt system, were based upon "who you knew." The second was the practice of splitting-up close-knit teams and moving individuals into new teams. Both practices purposefully disrupted the collectivity of the workforce as they encouraged competition, jealousy, and distrust. For example, Mr Red noted "That's what it all implies, you can get men working for different rates of pay kind of thing and bonuses, that's why you need Unions. It's like bringing contractors in kind of thing innit?".

The group argued that this passage indicates that God also employs such practices to maintain His position of power over humanity. God purposefully created laws that humanity could never successfully follow to create discord amongst humanity and to prevent them from ever recognising their collective power. For example, by being so focused on adhering to unfollowable laws and being preoccupied with the competition to "be the most pious" or "to get to heaven first," human beings fail to recognise their collective power. Humanity have therefore been purposefully pitted against one another in an impossible competition to serve God the best, distracting them from their potential power and thus their ability to challenge God. Coal miners have similarly been pitted against one another in the fight for wages and overtime to distract them from challenging their employers or the government. Finally, the men in this narrative wishing to work at the vineyard have also been pitted against one another in terms of the value of their labour. This ensures the vineyard owner maintains his power. This notion of "men against men" lay behind everything discussed during this session.

To further their interrogation of the distance and discord that exists between an employer and employees and God and humanity, the group sought to closely interrogate the word "friend" in verse thirteen. Here, the vineyard owner describes an employee as a "friend" when discussing the issue of money. The idea of an employer being an employee's friend, however, did not sit well with the group. They argued that "friend" was being used here insincerely and that the employer actually sought to demean the employee by using it and to remind him of

his subordinate place. Mr Black questioned "if he's the owner how can he be your friend?" and asserted that "it don't work, even if they are your friend before... you know?" The employer's use of the word "friend" only enforced his unquestionable authority by reminding the employee of the fact that he is, in fact, at the mercy of his employer.

2. More on "men against men"

The group primarily interpreted the passage to be a realistic portrayal of how the powerless are reliant upon the mercy of the powerful for their survival. In particular, the coal miners argued that the issue of pay—which is often entirely at the discretion of the employer—was the primary signifier of power within this narrative. The group asserted that the method and amount of payment described in this narrative was unfair and unjust and was reflective of the true cruel nature of the employer. For example, right at the very beginning of the session, Mr Purple stated that "it's good to have an agreement on wages, that's the first thing of course, they have an agreement there," but that in this case, "he's saying he'll pay a 'fair wage' but not told them how much."

The group interpreted the ambiguity regarding the pay as the owner deliberately trying to provoke unrest amongst the workforce by planting the seed of inequality, from which jealousy, envy, and competition grow.

For example, Mr Green noted the following about the issue of wages:

Poss putting men against men.
all getting the same wage regardless of
the amount of work that is being done

"Poss[ibly] putting men against men. All getting the same wage regardless of the amount of work that is being done."

In addition to this, Mr Red asserted, "you'd have thought he would pay the first men a lot more because you'd have thought they'd have been like the best men, so they're like your charge men kind of thing. And he's not distinguishing between skills is he? He wants to get them all on one side so he can pay them even less tomorrow." To which Mr Green agreed, "yeah, to split em up and suck em in."

This again demonstrates the potent divide and distrust that has long existed between the workforce and authority within their industry. Their time-honoured first-hand experience of the unbridgeable and negative divide between the powerful and the powerless led to a reading that imposed this divide upon both God and creation and the vineyard owner and the men in the marketplace.

3. Injustice

Building upon their interrogation of power and authority, the group used the passage to reflect upon various forms of injustice that exist within modern society, particularly in relation to employment. For example, the group used the passage to highlight the issues of unemployment, zero hour contracts, and unregulated immigration (and its perceived impact of employment levels).

In terms of the notion of injustice in their own lives, the coal miners primarily reflected upon the nature of the payment that the men employed at the vineyard received. They noted that in verse two it was clearly stipulated that the workers would receive a "silver coin," but in verse four this changed to the more imprecise "fair wage." Mr Purple asserted:

*3/4 A fair wage but not told them how much.
Can't imagine going to work not knowing.*

“3, 4. A fair wage but not told them how much. Can’t imagine going to work not knowing.”

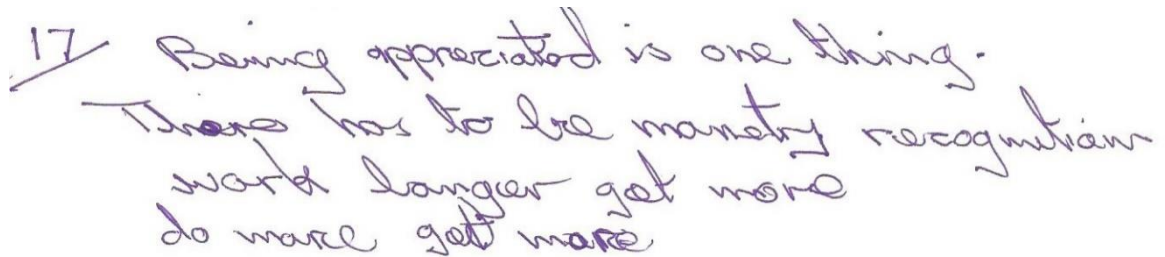
In response to the observation that the wage system in place was unfair and unjust, the group sought to question the following:

- Was the original silver coin a fair wage?
- How does an employee know what a fair wage is?
- How can you expect someone to go to work for an unknown wage?
- How does the vineyard owner expect the workers to work their hardest if they do not know their set wage?
- Does the vineyard owner not realise that this discrepancy in wages will cause discord amongst the men and thus impact upon whether the men will want to work for him in the future?

The group were very vocal about how unjust and unfair this lack of clarity regarding wages is. They argued that if the workers were part of a union then this would not happen, as the union would ensure a fair and precise wage for all. For example, Mr Green asserted, “that’s where the Union comes into all that,” with Mr Red adding, “the Union sorts out your contracts don’t they? That’d stop all this.” This conclusion demonstrates the group’s commitment to collectivity.

In contrast, the group were also stressed that if an agreement had been struck before work commenced, then that agreement should be stuck to, even if it transpired that others were earning more than you. Mr Brown argued, “those men have agreed to work for that money so they have nothing to complain about later on when they get that money.” Mr Black agreed: “They took the money and started grumbling against the employer, I’m talking about, you know, when I’ve worked in the coal industry. I took me money and grumbled against the employer, but they were the best employer I’ve ever had. To be honest!”

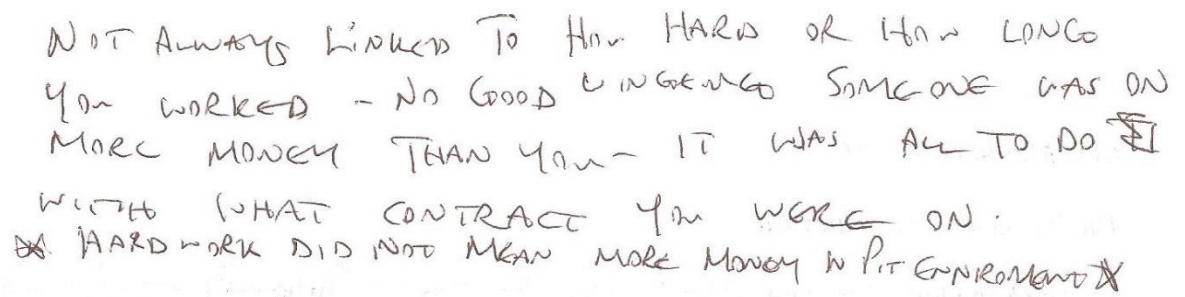
Mr Purple had particular problems with this aspect of the narrative as he noted:



17 Being appreciated is one thing.
There has to be monetary recognition
work longer get more
do more get more

"17. Being appreciated is one thing. There has to be monetary recognition. Work longer get more, do more, get more."

Mr Purple highlighted how wages can act as physical recognition for how well one has worked. The relationship between hard work and monetary recompense was something the group were keen to discuss. For example, Mr Brown similarly asserted the following:



NOT ALWAYS LINKED TO HOW HARD OR HOW LONG
YOU WORKED - NO GOOD WINGING SOMEONE WAS ON
MORE MONEY THAN YOU - IT WAS ALL TO DO
WITH WHAT CONTRACT YOU WERE ON.
HARDWORK DID NOT MEAN MORE MONEY IN PIT ENVIRONMENT

"Not always linked to how hard or how long you worked – no good wingeing [whinging] someone was on more money than you – it was all to do with what contract you were on.

* Hardwork [Hard work] did not mean more money in pit environment. *"

Here, Mr Brown highlights the injustice that many workers face in relation to the money they earn not being reflective of how hard they have worked. This observation led to a detailed discussion about humankind's proclivity for wanting to

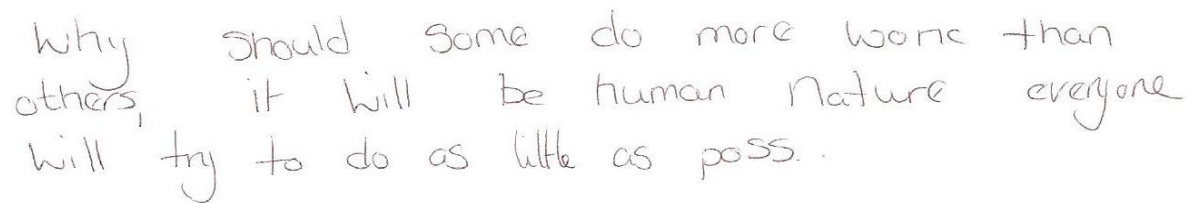
earn a lot for doing little. For the coal miners, this was something that they regularly experienced in their industry as they argued that whilst there was a strong emphasis on collectivity, "management's" focus on encouraging discord amongst the workforce meant that many men had become focused upon their own wellbeing and wages, not the wellbeing and wages of all.

In addition to focusing upon reading the narrative in light of the real world, the group also argued that it can be read as a metaphor for how heaven works (particularly verse sixteen). Mr Brown noted, "if this relates to what heaven's like then it's not very fair." Mr Black even asked, "so no matter what you do in life, you're gonna still end up in heaven? Could you imagine bumping into Hitler? Or bloody Sadam Hussein?". They argued that it was not only unfair, but also deeply unjust if those that had only recently started following God's laws were allowed into heaven before those that had devoted a lifetime to such an endeavour. The group generally found it very difficult to make sense of the narrative's final verse as they could not understand how such a scenario was fair and argued that it not only promoted inequality, but allowed people to happily live sinful lives as they would be safe in the knowledge that they will get into heaven first when they convert on their deathbed.

When reflecting on this issue, the group toyed with the idea that the reason "sinners" or "non-believers" may be allowed to enter heaven first might be because they require the most help to get there and therefore require more effort from God. Those that have lived good lives and have adhered to a good moral code, on the other hand, would be able to find their own way to heaven, without the help of divine intervention. Even though the group developed this proposal themselves, they still found it to be grossly unfair as they believed that this sort of system only encouraged an attitude whereby those that do good, work hard, or achieve in life are left to their own devices, yet those who are bad or lazy get extra help simply because they have been bad or lazy. Whilst the group did express some agreement with the notion of divine forgiveness, they could not reconcile the statement of the final verse with the concept of a fair and just afterlife.

4. Human Nature

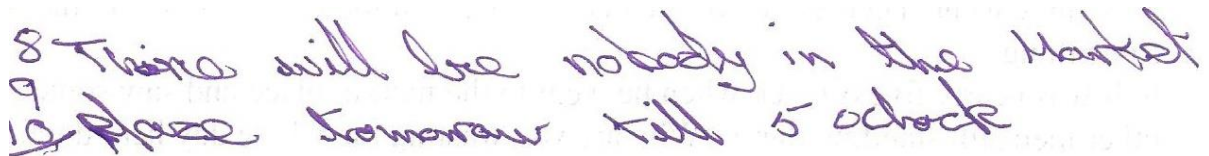
The group also used the narrative to reflect upon the negative aspects of human nature. For example, Mr Green noted:

A handwritten note in black ink on a white background. The text reads: "why should some do more work than others, it will be human nature everyone will try to do as little as poss." The word "poss" is written in a shorthand, likely for "possible".

why should some do more work than others, it will be human nature everyone will try to do as little as poss.

“Why should some do more work than others, it will be human nature everyone will try to do as little as poss[ible].”

Mr Purple also asserted:

A handwritten note in purple ink on a white background. The text is written in three lines: "8 There will be nobody in the Market", "9 place tomorrow till 5 o'clock", and "10". The word "place" is crossed out with a horizontal line.

8 There will be nobody in the Market
9 place tomorrow till 5 o'clock
10

“8, 9, 10. There will be nobody in the market place tomorrow till 5 o’clock.”

The group therefore strongly asserted that it was in the nature of humankind to try to do as little as possible for as much as possible and that if workers are offered the same amount of money for a full day’s work or a few hour’s work, they would always choose to work only the few hours. For example, Mr Red noted that if most people knew that they could be paid the same as others for doing half the work, they would “nip Weatherspoons fost [first]!”. The coal miners, however, warned that if this inherent lazy nature of humankind was allowed to flourish it would only ever have negative consequences for all. Mr Green, when

reflecting on all the extra labour many coal miners have put in to get a job done, even stated, "you're right, you're right. There's times we've said aw that's it, we ain't doing owt, we ain't doing owt, and ooo ayeup we've done same! Ant we?", meaning that they always go the extra mile and are not a lazy collective. Mr Red agreed stating, "a lot of them down the pit, no matter what they were on, they'd have still gone and done the job exactly the same."

However, whilst they argued that the vineyard owner's actions would encourage the lazy side of humanity, they also emphasised that once a contract was established (whether verbal or written), a person should not complain if it later transpires that others are on different contracts and are earning more. For example, Mr Brown asserted:

'11' Took money + started grumbling
They knew the price for the day
for their services. - The same for
pit contracts. - once signed had to live with it
Don't upset yourself if someone on more money
But also don't try + get their money reduced
- try + enhance your own - This occurred many times
at pit -

"Took money + started grumbling. They knew the price for the day for their services – the same for pit contracts – once signed had to live with it. Don't upset yourself if someone on more money but also don't try + get their money reduced – try + enhance your own – this occurred many times at pit."

Mr Brown's comments, which are directly reflective of the now contract-driven nature of coal-mining employment, not only emphasises one's personal responsibility for ensuring that one has the best contract possible, but the need for social or collective responsibility in the sense that it discourages one from boosting

one's wages by reducing one's colleagues'. This reflection led to a group discussion about the way money often causes human beings to turn their back on one another and how the environment of the workplace can be destroyed by having employees competing for the best contracts or the most money. However, the group concluded that the coal-mining mentality was to "get your basic [rate of pay] up" as a collective.

The group also reflected upon the purpose and logic of the management style used by the vineyard owner, in particular highlighting the fact that the way in which this vineyard owner was treating and paying his men could not only affect the owner's future business, but also the business of other vineyards. For example, the group noted that it could encourage men to start waiting for work in the late evening, meaning that there would not be enough time to collect the harvest, or "they could go from the other vineyards" as it could encourage men to be unwilling to work longer hours in other vineyards, negatively impacting the wider economy of the area.

5. Employers need Employees

As with many of the other passages that the group read, this passage was also used to reflect upon the nature of power and authority. In the case of this passage, the group argued that whilst the employer was keen to wield their power and to remind the employees of and reinforce their lack of power, in reality, employers need employees. Although the employees rely upon employers for their employment and thus income, the coal miners argued that if the employees refused to work, then the employers would be in a worse situation as their business would suffer. For example, the group argued that this narrative is a prime example of how the formation of a union would cause a dramatic shift in the balance of power between employers and employees. However, the group also noted that the creation of a union should not be to remove an employer's power in its entirety, but should instead exist to ensure that there is a balance of power.

The group asserted that the same can be applied to the relationship between God and creation: God should not want to hold complete control over creation, but He should instead want to create a balance of power with humanity. However, the group were aware of how difficult it would be for humanity in their current position of subservience to successfully challenge God into sharing power. In addition, the group also speculated about how an omnipotent being would ever be held accountable for their actions by mortal beings with limited power. However, just as they previously identified, the group noted that God’s one weakness may be His need to be worshipped. If humanity chose to ignore God and to deny Him worship, then He would lose His power as it would be transferred to humanity. However, this relies upon God not destroying humanity in response to their deliberate ignorance—something that the coal miners noted would be God’s first resort rather than His last and a reflection that they strengthened by quoting numerous other biblical texts, many from Genesis, such as the Flood narrative, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Lot’s wife being turned to salt, and the tower of Babel narrative.

Job 17:1-16: “Well this is depressing!”¹⁰²³ – Mr Purple

Again, I will divide my analysis of the coal miners’ reading of Job 17:1-16¹⁰²⁴ into manageable sections:

¹⁰²³ It is interesting to note that within Biblical Studies the Book of Job has been repeatedly turned to address the issue of trauma, for example, see: Kirsten Nielsen, “Post-Traumatic Stress and the Book of Job,” in *Trauma and Traumatization in Individual and Collective Dimensions: Insights from Biblical Studies and Beyond*, eds. Eve-Marie Becker, Jan Dockhorn and Else Holt (Bristol: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co, 2014), 62-70; Gerald O. West, “Between Text and Trauma: Reading the Epilogue of Job with People Living with HIV,” (paper presented at the 2014 Society of Biblical Literature Annual Conference, San Diego, California, 22-25 November 2014); “Reading Job ‘Positively’ in the Context of HIV/AIDS in South Africa,” *Concilium* 4 (2004): 112-124. The fact that Job was used most explicitly by the coal miners in this study to directly address the trauma that their experience of mass involuntary redundancy caused them is therefore no coincidence as this text lends itself well to discussing such issues.

¹⁰²⁴ For the exegetical map produced during this session, see Appendix 14.

1. Job or Job?!
2. First impressions;
3. The end of their lives: empathising with Job;
4. Embarrassment;
5. A glimmer of hope.

1. Job or Job?!

The group experienced some confusion when completing their "homeworks" for the Job session as both Mr Green and Mr Red thought that they were reading a passage about someone's job and thus found the passage quite confusing when reading it on their own. The other three were aware that "Job" was the name of a man and that something significant had befallen him. For example, Mr Brown explained to the group that "it's about what God done to him, he's had the shit kicked out of him by God and this whatsit... and the devil's challenge," with Mr Purple adding, "God obviously depressed him I'd say." This small example highlights the differing extents of the group's extant biblical literacy, with every member at some point during the programme knowing more or less than his counterparts.

2. First Impressions

Rarely did the coal miners write one single, clear, succinct summary of their overall interpretation of a passage. Instead, their "homework" was usually littered with many different ideas with their overall summary being saved as an oral contribution in the group sessions. However, in this instance, the majority of the group wrote a clear summative statement at the top of their "homework." Below are the overall summaries as written by Mr Brown, Mr Green and Mr Purple:

Immediate thoughts ① [Redacted] ② This year at Daw Mill

"Immediate thoughts 1. [Redacted name of one of Mr Brown's colleagues who died of asphyxiation by Methane gas whilst at work] 2. This year at Daw Mill."

A DEFEATEST GAVE UP ON EVERY THING

"A defeatest [defeatist] gave up on every thing [everything]."

THE END OF MY PIT LIFE

"The end of my pit life."

FOUND JOB'S SPEECH TOTALLY
DEPRESSING

"Found Job's speech totally depressing."

These four simple, yet powerful summaries of Job 17:1-16 act as clear indicators of the tone of the readings that were to come, the emotional state of the coal miners at this moment in time, and how this particular passage was related to, and read in light of, their recent experience of trauma.

3. The End of their Lives: Empathising with Job

To begin with, the group focused entirely upon empathising with Job and relating his situation with God to their redundancy situation. Again, the emphasis lay on seeing both God and their company as being unfair and unjust and Job being a man condemned to an undeserved destiny by a capricious supreme authority. As usual, the group related the power of God to the power of coal-mining companies. The most interesting aspect of their interpretation of this passage, however, related to the circumstances of Daw Mill colliery's closure. For example, although the fire that closed Daw Mill was a tragic accident, this seemed to slip the minds of the coal miners during this session as they consistently found ways to blame the company for it happening. Mr Green explained that he had "got him [Job] down as like very sad, sadness, and a condemned man." Mr Purple responded to this by asking, "but is that how you felt about yourself after the pit shut? I did, I felt a bit like that myself."

Strong emphasis was placed upon the trauma of redundancy literally being the end of their lives. Mr Brown and Mr Purple were the most vocal about how detrimentally their redundancy had affected them as they repeatedly commented that the closure of the colliery could be likened to Job's forlorn statements about having his hope removed, his world collapse around him, and his being in darkness. This reading led to a revealing discussion about older miners (predominantly the participants' fathers or grandfathers) who, upon being made redundant, died shortly after. The group argued that because of the strong connection between vocation and identity for coal miners, once coal miners were forced to leave the industry, they often did not want to live any longer.¹⁰²⁵

¹⁰²⁵ This might seem extreme, but the group verified this analysis with various accounts of former colleagues who are now suffering with depression and alcoholism as a result of their redundancy, as well as with stories of how some men had to be "dragged in tears, kicking and screaming" from collieries once they were closed.

Attention was thus drawn to how their redundancy has ultimately led to their cultural isolation, with Mr Black explaining, "now we're getting a dwindling folks aren't we? We're all getting older. There's nobody else to share this kind of information with, or talk about with," and Mr Brown supporting him with, "and that's what I've put there, there's no-one else to support what I say, we could talk all we like but no-one else supports it."

However, they questioned whether Job had bought this situation on himself by angering God. Mr Brown questioned whether "he's betrayed his friends for money and now... he's a dad... his children are suffering for it, but he's suffering for it." Similarly, Mr Green stated, "ah but he wasn't bothered, he'd knock everybody out the way to get what he wanted." And finally, Mr Red asserted, "he wah against them, like a scab. That's what I reckon he is." Given that the behaviour of a "scab" is particularly repugnant in coal-mining culture, it is not surprising that when seeking to decide what behaviour could have led to God punishing someone so much, the group determining that "scab" behaviour was a potential explanation.

4. Embarrassment

The group also used the passage to reflect upon the embarrassment many coal miners feel when searching for new work, attending the Job Centre to collect Job Seekers Allowance or for retraining purposes, or taking "inferior" jobs.¹⁰²⁶ For example, Mr Brown confided:

2. I watch how bitterly everyone mocks me. — How I feel daig job I do now — embarrassed
3. I am being honest, God. Accept my word. There is no one else to support what I say. — No one interested in our situation I shouldn't be like this

¹⁰²⁶ Many of the coal miners I spoke to had never been employed in any other profession than coal mining. In addition, many of the men I spoke to refused to attend the Job Centre to claim Job Seeker's Allowance because of the high degree of embarrassment and shame it caused them.

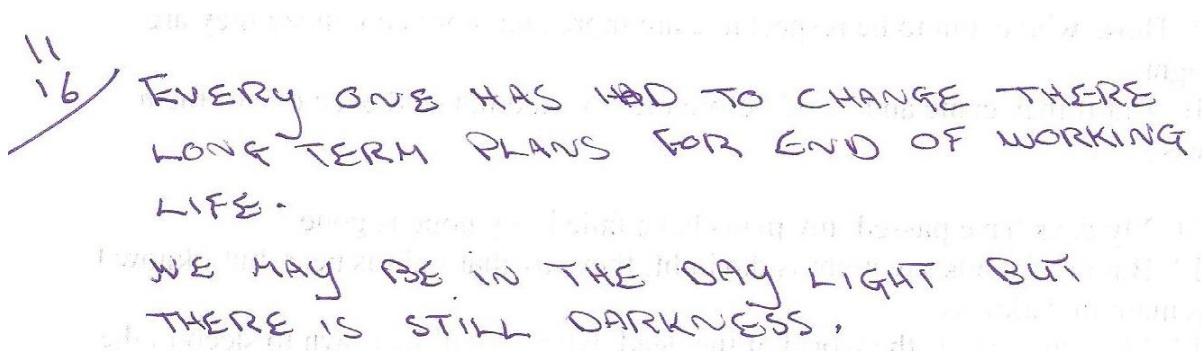
“[v.2] How I feel doing job I do now – embarrassed/shouldn’t be like this. [v.3] No one interested in our situation.”

Similarly, Mr Black described life post-redundancy as “a different bloody world”, and Mr Green revealed “you felt as though people were gloating or laughing at ya.” Verse two was particularly pertinent for the coal miners’ current situation as they interpreted it as the way in which others on the outside of the coal-mining community, as well as the managers from within coal-mining companies, view them now that they are no longer “somebodies”¹⁰²⁷ and they all found it difficult to adjust to a world where they were no longer coal miners and were either unemployed or working in “lesser” jobs.

5. A Glimmer of Hope

Mr Purple started the session with a mentality that can be summarised by the following observation on his “homework”:

¹⁰²⁷ Mr Brown was particularly vocal about the way in which coal miners thought of themselves as important people and “somebodies” when they were working in the industry. Mr Brown openly stated that it was particularly distressing for him that he would no longer have this status and that he would now be considered a “nobody.” He further expanded upon his concerns about being a “nobody” by reflecting upon how humiliating it was for him to go to the Job Centre to register for Job Seeker’s Allowance now that he was unemployed. Mr Brown was also further incensed by this reality when the Job Centre staff informed him that it would be necessary for him to do various courses in basic IT. Whilst Mr Brown did attend these sessions, his description of his fellow attendees being “scrubbers,” “scroungers” or “rough” made it overtly clear that he found the whole experience mortifying. Mr Purple, however, completely refused to even register for any benefits as he found the whole concept far too embarrassing and humiliating.



11/16 EVERY ONE HAS HAD TO CHANGE THERE
LONG TERM PLANS FOR END OF WORKING
LIFE.
WE MAY BE IN THE DAY LIGHT BUT
THERE IS STILL DARKNESS.

"Every one [Everyone] has had to change there [their] long term plans for end of working life. We may be in the day light but there is still darkness."

He also stated, "number one I've just got it down as it depressed me that much I just put it down as it's the end of my pit life – crikey – this guy's down and he's got me down as well."

However, when Mr Purple put this reflection to the group, it was met with agreement and disagreement. The group agreed that whilst their current life may be over, this does not mean that they cannot have a new life. For example, even though Mr Brown was also considerably traumatised by his experience of involuntary redundancy, he still emphasised that the chief message of Job's story should be the following:



But there is hope after this shit.

"But there is hope after this shit."

Similarly, Mr Green explained, "I'm alright with it now, I wasn't at first, but I'm alright with it now." In addition to this, when analysing the second part of verse twelve, Mr Brown continued his reading by noting that although they too were in darkness, they were now coming through it: "And things have just dwindled away. 'But my friends say night is daylight, they say that light is near but I know I remain in darkness' that's how I felt but it's getting better. You felt like you was in darkness,

darkness I meant as in your mind, or in your thoughts." He even noted the irony that now they no longer had to physically descend into the darkness, they were in darkness more than ever. The other members of the group agreed with Mr Brown and similarly asserted that although they were currently "in the darkness," they too realised that they were moving through it. They noted that unlike Job, they do have hope.

One of the main ways in which the group seemed to have reached this pivotal turning point of now viewing their situation as one of hope rather than one of despair, was through directly comparing themselves to Job. They saw Job as being in an even worse position than themselves as they noted that at least they still had their health, their homes, and their families. In addition, they also thought that being at the hands of a spiteful God was worse than being at the hands of a spiteful company.

The group also noted that whilst they could not understand why God was doing this to Job, they knew that God had "form" as he had done this before, citing Abraham and the binding of Isaac as their example. This led to the group concluding that God unjustly and unnecessarily tests those that abide by His laws.

Whilst the Job passage enabled the coal miners to see that there is hope for their situation and that they will come through the darkness, the sessions also demonstrated that they still have a long way to go before the trauma of redundancy is healed.

CHAPTER SEVEN. CONCLUSION

When considering the timing of this research project, it should come as no surprise that the task of offering a conclusive summary of its findings is a difficult one, especially as the full impact of the events I came to witness (and thus record in this thesis) have yet to be seen. It is not possible for me to offer a final analysis of what the future holds for those men who unfortunately came to be Britain’s last deep-coal coal miners or to answer the question of whether the culture of coal mining will continue to exist even though the collieries have now gone. In spite of this, it is still possible for me to offer a number of substantial and significant conclusive assessments regarding how my research has contributed to the future development of CBS within the discipline of Biblical Studies.

This conclusion will therefore focus upon summarising the following: 1. How my research demonstrates that CBS was in need of being grounded in ethnography and the difference this makes to both the research process and the resultant findings; 2. What further revisions my own experimental revision of CBS has indicated may also be needed and what the future may hold for this contextual biblical interpretation methodology.

Grounding Contextual Bible Study in Ethnography – What’s the Point?

By implementing a CBS programme that was thoroughly grounded in ethnography, I have been able to demonstrate that this methodological revision makes the

following six significant differences to both the CBS process and the ultimate findings (the CBS readings) of a CBS programme.

Firstly, it provides the researcher conducting the research and facilitating the CBS programme with a more nuanced understanding of the "ordinary" readers they are "reading with" at all stages of the research project, from planning what texts to read and what themes to interrogate, to analysing the final contextual interpretations and understanding how they link to, and are reflective of, the context of the readers. Conducting a detailed ethnography of the "ordinary" readers to be "read with" before the development and implementation of a CBS programme ensures that the texts and themes of a CBS programme can be better chosen to reap the most effective results, both in terms of creating interesting and thought-provoking research that captures the attention of the academy and in terms of producing readings that make a difference to the lives of those producing them. Such programmes will then be successful as both research and social engagement.

If I had failed to conduct my own ethnographic study of the state of contemporary coal mining in both South Derbyshire and Britain as a whole and had instead relied upon extant studies, I would not have been aware of the current circumstances of modern coal miners, the experiences they were currently having, and their most pressing needs and concerns.

Second, grounding CBS in ethnography ensures that the research being conducted is done in as sensitive a manner as possible and that the contextual realities of those being "read with" are placed at the fore of the process. Therefore, not only can a researcher identify the most relevant issues needed to be discussed by a certain context, but is also able to identify issues that may be too sensitive to discuss or that need special attention when discussing them in order to avoid further upset, stress, or trauma. An ethnographic study ensures a researcher is alert to themes that may act as negative triggers. In terms of this project, my ethnographic research alerted me to just how traumatic involuntary redundancy could be for coal miners owing to my uncovering of the powerful connection between vocation and identity in this context. Consequently, I was prepared to handle this issue delicately and had found contact details for charities the coal

miners could contact if they needed someone to confide in to work through their feelings.

Third, it prevents the production of a lack lustre or flat analysis of the readings produced, as the researcher is able to understand the readings beyond their face value. The significance of even the smallest contextual interpretation can therefore be teased out and is not overlooked. My research demonstrates this by my continued ability to refer back to the contextual circumstances of the men participating in my study and my ethnographic data at every point when analysing the readings produced.

Fourth, by producing a written ethnography included alongside the end report of a CBS programme, a researcher is able to bridge the cultural difference that may exist between the end reader’s context and the context of those participating in the CBS programme. This is done by repeatedly placing the readings directly in the context of those who produced them, thus the final reader is as immersed as possible in the reality of those producing the readings.

Fifth, the final reader is able to judge the researcher’s interpretations of the contextual biblical readings by reading them alongside the ethnographic data themselves. Thus, the end reader can fact-check the researcher’s analysis, as well as being able to draw their own analysis.

Finally, by incorporating ethnography into CBS with the help of reflexivity, the researcher is able to be transparent about every aspect of the research process, their connection to their research, and their biases that have influenced the development of their research.

The Future of Contextual Bible Study

Owing to the time constraints of PhD research and the fact that this project was an experiment, at times it was necessary for me to run before I could walk or to leave behind additional findings that I could not devote time to further developing. Therefore, when my research revealed the potential for CBS to be further

methodologically developed or revised in a variety of different ways, I was unable to act upon them. Whilst this was frustrating, it was necessary for me to side-step such findings to focus on the specific methodological revision that I had already identified. My revision of grounding CBS in ethnography therefore revealed the following six ways in which CBS can be further refined in the future.

First, upon reaching the midpoint of the CBS programme, it became clear that the group I was "reading with" were feeling trapped by their mode of reading. In the final one-on-one interviews, Mr Brown, Mr Black, and Mr Purple all noted that they "could not escape" their current circumstances and that they were glad that the programme had come to an end as they felt they were not getting anywhere with their readings, as they kept reflecting on the same issues. They were aware of how their negative preoccupation with power, authority, and "the company" was controlling their worldview and that it was determining how they read every single text. They knew that they would be unable to step back from this worldview or to evolve beyond it.

As a result of this, I determined that researchers using CBS should use both their ethnographic findings and knowledge of extant CBS programmes to prepare for this eventuality and to have solutions they can turn to should their group also feel they have become trapped by their context and that they are not making any positive progress. It is my suggestion that researchers be armed with a selection of contextual readings produced by different groups of "ordinary" readers, perhaps from vastly different contexts, of the same texts that they are reading. They can then distribute these readings to the group and encourage them to consider these alternative contextual readings and the contextual realities that may have led to their production in light of their own readings and to use them to actually interrogate their own contextual setting and how this has led to the development of their own mode of reading. This would positively disrupt the mode of reading that has been developed and would alert the "ordinary" readers to the reasons behind their preoccupation with certain themes or issues.

For example, I could have done this in the Matthew session as West also read this narrative with a group of “ordinary” readers in South Africa.¹⁰²⁸ Presenting the coal miners with this alternative South African reading would have enabled me to ask them to unpick what aspects of the South African context led to the development of the reading and what this then told us about not only this particular South African context, but their own.

Second, I would also have liked to present the coal miners with alternative readings that challenged the readings that they were producing. This would again positively disrupt the mode of reading being developed and would have encouraged the group to interrogate the readings they were producing in greater depth and thus the extent to which their context is shaping and impacting their worldview. This would be beneficial as it would help highlight to a group how they might be manipulating a text in order for it to fit their preconceived ideas—something that became evident during the coal miners’ sessions, most notably when it came to the issues of power and authority. By being confronted with a challenging alternative reading, a group would be provided with an opportunity to further interrogate, justify, or even modify their own reading.

My third tweak would be to explore how additional texts, such as poetry, short stories, or even films and music, could be used in conjunction with, and to supplement, biblical texts in a CBS programme. For example, such texts could be used as controls to interrogate whether the mode of reading a group develops is the same way for all texts. For example, it would have been beneficial for my analysis of the coal miners’ readings to see whether they would have interpreted authority figures from poems or short stories outside of the Bible in the same way that they interpreted authority figures from within it. By using other texts as points of comparison, I could have assessed whether the fact that the Bible has long played a significant role in the development of Britain, with much of the populace having some form of biblical literacy, was the reason the coal miners focused upon interpreting God as the ultimate unjust figure of authority— as the coal miners already had extant knowledge of biblical passages where God exhibited extreme

¹⁰²⁸ See: West and Zwane, ““Why are you sitting there?””

wrath or vengefulness and thus may have expected the same behaviour in the biblical passages we read—or whether their readings were simply a result of years of distrust of authority in the coal-mining industry which might be implied if we were to read material that was wholly new to the miners and which still resulted in discussions of authority, power and corruption.

My fourth development would be to further explore the potential of CBS as a form of therapy. This would require the working on the final "Act" stage of CBS to explicitly include personal transformation as a legitimate outcome of CBS. My recognition of this potential of CBS occurred as a result of the way in which the coal miners' mode of reading developed as the programme went on. It was apparent that whilst they identified that they could not escape their current circumstances and that they dominated their worldview, they were able to discuss these issues in a constructive manner that acted as the beginnings of the working through of the trauma of their experiences. Thus, a CBS programme could be devised with therapy as its explicit aim.

This leads to my fifth development which would be to design a CBS programme in collaboration with individuals who possess skills and expertise that biblical scholars do not. For example, it would be essential to the development of CBS as a form of therapy to work alongside a trained therapist or medical professional. This would ensure that when seeking to establish CBS as a form of therapy, it is done in a safe and thoroughly considered manner. In addition, by working in collaboration with trained professionals, CBS programmes could be designed to tackle more challenging contexts or traumas that would otherwise be inappropriate or unsafe for a biblical scholar to seek to address on their own. For example, issues that could act as triggers could be more sensitively approached and deep-rooted traumas could be healed.

Finally, my sixth development would be to further incorporate the use of visual material into CBS. For example, I would have liked to have had the time and resources to interpret texts using photography, just as I was able to do with Jeremiah 18:1-12. Every stage of this photograph, from the time it took to produce it and the conversations that were had when taking it, to how it then visually captured and illustrated the coal miners' reading of Jeremiah 18:1-12, was

beneficial to both myself and the coal miners. This, again however, would also require interdisciplinary collaboration.

Ultimately, this project has successfully demonstrated how CBS can be greatly enhanced by formally stipulating that it should be grounded in reflexive ethnography. Additionally, by putting this into practice, this project has shown that this is the key to developing CBS further in the future.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1. TABULATION OF RECORDING METHODS UTILISED DURING THIS RESEARCH PROJECT

Type of recording:	Description:
Audio-recording	Every session was audio-recorded using a Dictaphone.
Transcription	I then transcribed each audio-recording.
“Homework”/individual interpretations	The coal miners were given copies of each text in advance of the sessions and were asked to annotate them with their personal interpretations of the text ready to discuss in the group sessions.
“Exegetical map”/group interpretations	During each session we created an “exegetical map” upon which we recorded the group’s interpretations as they developed. This took the format of an A3 spider-diagram. Whilst I offered the coal miners the opportunity to draw/write the “exegetical maps” themselves, they preferred me to do as they were under confident with their literacy abilities.
Additional questionnaires and surveys	Throughout the CBS programme I circulated a variety of additional surveys and questionnaires in order to gather as much data about the coal miners as possible.
Field diary	At the end of each session I made reflective notes in a field diary. My reflections were generally on the following: the chemistry of the group, their behaviour, the topics of discussion, the progress of the session, the nature of the interpretations offered, and whether I felt the chosen text and theme actually resonated with them.

APPENDIX 2. TABULATION OF CONSENT FORMS UTILISED DURING THIS RESEARCH PROJECT

Form:	Purpose:
A	Employment and Commuting Questionnaire – to learn which collieries each coal miner had been employed at and how far away they lived from each colliery.
B1	Oral History Survey (pilots to a small sample of coal miners) – to gather stories about life as a coal miner.
B2	Explanation Letter and Oral History Survey (William Allitt School version) – to appeal to the public for stories about life as a coal miner.
B3	Oral History Survey (artists’ version) – to appeal to artists who have created artwork based upon the coal mining industry for information about their connection to coal mining and their reasons for creating artwork based upon this industry.
B4	Oral History Survey (final days at Daw Mill version) – handed to a small number of coal miners employed by Daw Mill colliery to gather stories about their experience of the colliery closing.
C	General Interview Consent Form.
D	General Digital Recordings Consent Form.
E	Religiosity Survey – to learn about the religious/spiritual identification of those participating in the CBS programme.
F	Responses to Biblical Passage Survey – this was never used.
G	Extended Writing Consent Form.
H	General Interview Consent Form.
I	Participation in Group Study Sessions and/or Focus Groups Consent Form.
J	General Digital Recordings Consent Form.
K1	Coal Mining Stained Glass Window Analysis Questionnaire (St George and St Mary’s congregation version) – to assess what this window may mean to local people.
K2	Coal Mining Stained Glass Window Analysis Questionnaire (coal miner version) – to assess what this window may mean to coal miners.
L1	Photography Consent Form.
L2	Photography Consent Form.
M	Participation in Contextual Bible Reading Project Consent Form.
N	Coal Mining Career Questionnaire – to learn about the coal miners’ employment in the industry.
O	William Allitt School Collaborative Art and Local History Project (Head of Art Consent Form) – this related to an additional public engagement with research project that developed as an offshoot of my research.
P	Mini-Autobiography Consent Form – to gain further information about life as a coal miner.

Q	Public survey of the coal mining mural at Morrisons supermarket, Swadlincote – to assess what this mural may mean to local people.
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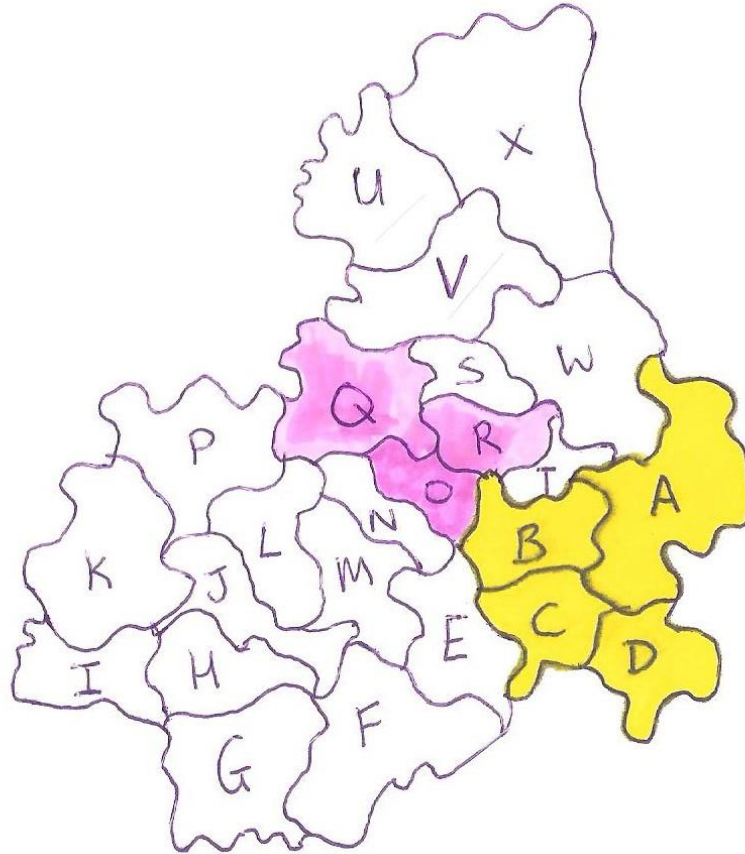
The forms highlighted in yellow were used to gain consent from those contributing to my ethnographic fieldwork and the forms highlighted in green were used to gain consent from those participating in the CBS programme. In addition to giving their initial signed consent, participants were re-approached on various occasions throughout the project to verbally confirm their continued consent. This was particularly important for those involved in any prolonged aspects of the research, such the CBS programme.

APPENDIX 3. TABULATION OF HOW I PUT REFLEXIVITY INTO PRACTICE

Method:	Description:
Journals	I used a number of journals throughout this project to record all aspects of its development. My journals were handwritten and a total of fourteen were produced.
Portfolios	In addition to keeping journals, I also created a series of portfolios to record the development and findings of the project’s key stages – with one portfolio being devoted to my ethnographic research and one being devoted to the CBS programme. These portfolios were predominantly in paper format (such as large ring binder folders) and consisted of filed materials collected throughout the project. For example, items that coal miners donated to my research (such as underground maps of collieries and photographs). The materials were often accompanied with personal annotations (such as notes about how and when they were required and why they were of value to the project). The photographs I took as part of my ethnographic research were saved in a digital portfolio.
Scrapbook	I chose to record the journey of my PhD in a scrapbook. This primarily consisted of traditional scrapbooking methods, for example, collecting tickets from conferences and academic events. This was more of a personal activity, but it really helped me reflect upon how I have developed throughout this project.
Fact-checking informal presentations to, and discussions with, participants	I chose to fact-check all the data I collected via both my ethnographic work and the CBS programme by informally presenting it back to participants. I also made sure that I regularly had informal discussions

	with participants so as to keep them abreast of my research and to get their opinion on my findings. This included informing participants about the feedback I received during supervisions and after presenting at conferences.
"Now what?" and "So what?" posters	This is a method that I have been using for many years now – it encourages you to think about each stage of your research by looking at it from the perspective of a disinterested outsider. Each time you complete something or find something new you must ask yourself "now what?" or "so what?" to push yourself to interrogate your research in as much detail as possible. I predominantly do this through the creation of large posters with each poster being devoted to a specific aspect or finding of my research.
Formal presentations	This is the most traditional method of reflecting on research in the academy and consists of activities such as presenting your research findings to your PhD supervisor, presenting conference papers, and publishing articles. The feedback received enables you to think about your research from a different perspective and in greater depth.

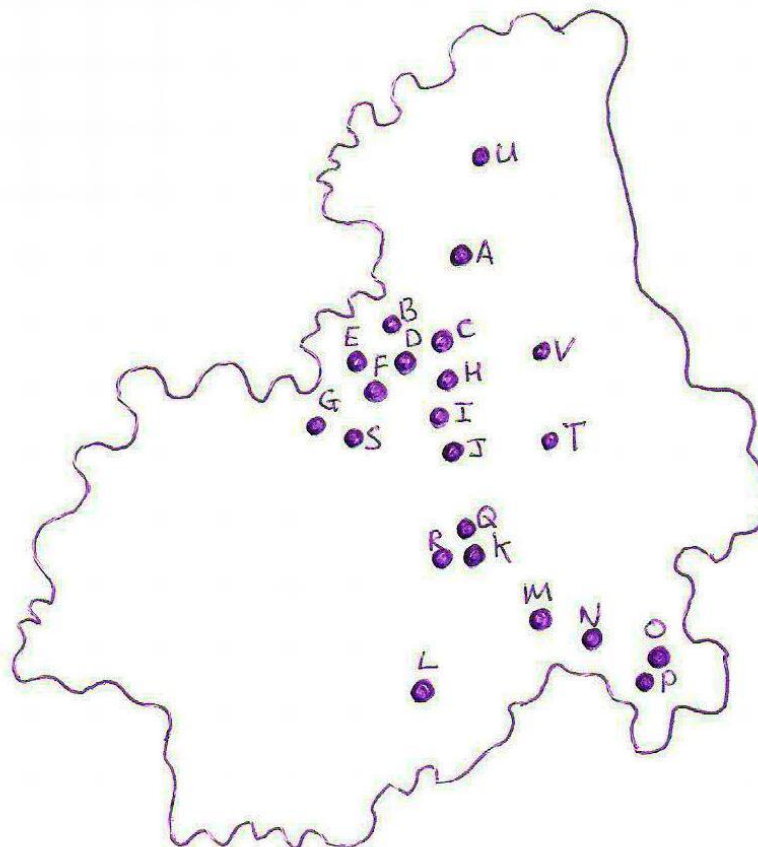
APPENDIX 4. MAP ONE – THE VILLAGES AND TOWNS THAT FORMED MY RESEARCH
 FIELD (THE SOUTH DERBYSHIRE COALFIELD)



Letter	Village/town	Additional information
A	Ashby-de-la-Zouch	North-West Leicestershire
B	Ashby Woulds (Albert Village, Boothorpe, Moira, Norris Hill and Spring Cottage)	North-West Leicestershire
C	Donisthorpe, Oakthorpe and Acresford	North-West Leicestershire
D	Measham	North-West Leicestershire
E	Overseal	
F	Netherseal	
G	Lullington	
H	Coton in the Elms	
I	Catton	
J	Rosliston	

K	Walton on Trent	
L	Caudwell	
M	Linton	
N	Castle Gresley	
O	Church Gresley	Location of coal miners who participated in CBS sessions
P	Drakelow	
Q	Stanton and Newhall	Location of coal miners who participated in CBS sessions
R	Swadlincote	Location of coal miners who participated in CBS sessions
S	Midway	
T	Woodville	
U	Newton Soleny	
V	Bretby	
W	Hartshorne	
X	Repton	

APPENDIX 5. MAP TWO – THE DEEP-COAL COLLIERIES SUNK IN THE SOUTH DERBYSHIRE COALFIELD BETWEEN 1800 AND 1990



Letter	Colliery name
A	Bretby
B	Woodville
C	Newhall
D	Granville
E	Stanton
F	Cadley Hill
G	Coton Park
H	Swadlincote
I	Gresley Wood
J	Church Gresley
K	Moirs
L	Netherseal
M	Donisthorpe – the last colliery in South Derbyshire, which closed in 1991.
N	Oakthorpe
O	Measham
P	Minorca
Q	Rawdon
R	Marquis
S	Castle Gresley
T	Blackfordby
U	Repton
V	Hartshorne

APPENDIX 6. TABULATION OF KEY INFORMANTS

Name:	Participation:
Mr A / Mr Brown	Initial pilot / general ethnographic research / psychogeographical walk / <i>Image Speaks</i> photograph / photographic essay / coal mining stained glass window research / CBS sessions
Mr B	Initial pilot / general ethnographic research / psychogeographical walk / coal mining stained glass window research
Mr C / Mr Red	Initial pilot / general ethnographic research / CBS sessions
Mr D	Initial pilot / general ethnographic research
Mr E	Initial pilot / general ethnographic research
Mr F	Initial pilot / general ethnographic research
Mr G	Initial pilot / general ethnographic research / coal mining stained glass window research
Mr H	General ethnographic research / St Barbara tattoo
Mr I	General ethnographic research
Mr J	General ethnographic research / submission of in-depth memoir
Mr K	General ethnographic research / photographic essay
Mr L / Mr Black	General ethnographic research / <i>Image Speaks</i> photograph / CBS sessions
Mr M / Mr Green	General ethnographic research / CBS sessions
Mr N / Mr Purple	General ethnographic research / <i>Image Speaks</i> photograph / CBS sessions
Mr Blue	CBS programme design / CBS sessions

The coal miners that participated in both my ethnographic research and the CBS sessions have been given two names so as to distinguish the different sets of data they contributed to the different aspects of my project. For example, Mr Letter acknowledges their role in my ethnographic research and Mr Colour acknowledges their role in my CBS research.

APPENDIX 7. TABULATION OF GENERAL INFORMANTS

Name:	Participation:
Various members of the SDMPG	General ethnographic research
Various volunteers at the Magic Attic Archives	General ethnographic research
Large variety of staff members at various coal mining related museums and attractions	General ethnographic research

APPENDIX 8. TABULATION OF ALL METHODS UTILISED DURING MY ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH AND THE DATA EACH METHOD GENERATED

Place in timeline:	Approx. dates: ¹⁰²⁹	Activity:	Purpose:	Actions/methods:	Outcome/data acquired:
1	October 2012.	Completion of appropriate University of Sheffield ethical approval form.	To ensure my research meets all necessary ethical requirements.	- The written completion of the Faculty of Sociological Studies’ official ethical approval form.	- Full authorisation by Biblical Studies ethical approval committee.
★	October 2012.	Field visit to the National Coal Mining Museum, Wakefield, South Yorkshire.	To begin researching the history and culture of coal mining in Britain.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A guided underground tour of the museum’s on-site working coal mine. This included my learning to use and wear essential coal mining equipment, such as a helmet, lamp, and self-rescuer. Such tours are conducted by ex-coal miners; - Informal discussions with all museum staff, specifically underground guides; - Tour of the on-site art gallery, which consists of artwork depicting coal mining; - Examination and photographing of museum artefacts; - Use of sensory ethnography techniques when on the underground 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I took approx. 20 photographs of the site, excluding the underground areas as this was not allowed; - I was unable to record the discussions I had with the museum’s staff (especially the discussions I had underground), but I made copious notes in my field journal once home; - The wearing of relevant safety equipment, the opportunity to descend via the “cage” into the mine, and the underground tour provided me with an opportunity to experience (albeit in a limited manner) what it is like to work in a coal mine. Again, I reflected on this experiential aspect of my research in my field journal. Similarly, to actually see a coal miner walk, talk, and work within a coal mine was an invaluable opportunity for developing my understanding of a coal mining.

¹⁰²⁹ The months stated should be understood as full calendar months.

				tour (such as paying close attention to sight, sound, smell, touch, emotions, and my personal experience of being in the space).	
★	October 2012.	Field visit to the D. H. Lawrence birthplace museum.	Lawrence was the son of a coal miner and grew up in the coal mining village of Eastwood, Nottinghamshire. Because of this, many of his writings focus on coal mining, thus I included researching such works in my ethnographic research.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Informal discussions with museum staff; - Guided tour of Lawrence’s childhood home; - Examination of Lawrence’s home, belongings, writings, and artwork; - Ethnographic walking along the museum’s marked-out path from the exhibition centre to Lawrence’s home. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I did not record my discussions with the museum staff, nor the guided tour. However, I did make notes once home; - I took approx. 10 photographs whilst walking along the route from the exhibition centre to Lawrence’s home and when I was on the guided tour in his home.
2	October 2012-October 2014.	Regular and repeated ethnographic walking through, and field visits to, the villages and towns that form South Derbyshire, as well as to the sites of old South Derbyshire collieries, including: Measham, Rawdon, Oakthorpe,	To research and experience the history and heritage of coal mining in South Derbyshire, to witness and assess how the coal mining industry has changed the landscape of South Derbyshire, and to record via multiple mediums what remains of the industry in this area and the impact that it has had upon the area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ethnographic walking. This was done in a somewhat psychogeographical manner as I also sought to reflect on my own connection to the area; - Employment of sensory ethnography techniques when walking through these areas; - Employment of visual ethnography techniques, both in terms of the production of data (such as through the photographing, filming, drawing, and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I took approx. 200 photographs over my time repeatedly visiting these sites. I also did multiple drawings (mostly in the form of sketches and maps) of many of the colliery sites; - I made innumerable journal entries reflecting on my thoughts and experiences when visiting the sites, as well as any knowledge gained during my visits; - I did not record any of the discussion I had with members of the public (as they occurred spontaneously), but if any notable information arose, I would jot it down.


		Donisthorpe, Swadlincote, Church Gresley, Cadley Hill, and Bretby.		mapping of colliery sites, remaining colliery buildings and headstocks, and coal mining memorials) and in terms of paying close attention to and analysing extant visual material in these areas (such as public art in the form of coal mining memorials); - Informal <i>ad-hoc</i> discussions with members of the South Derbyshire general public. This often occurred when members of the public approached me to ask why I was taking photographs and so on; - As many of the old South Derbyshire collieries have now been transformed into picnic areas, nature reserves, or parks, towards the writing-up stage of my research I would go and write in these areas in an attempt to further imbibe the heritage of the area.	
3	October 2012-October 2015.	Reading of secondary literature.	To research the history and culture of coal mining in both Britain and South Derbyshire, as well as to assess	The following genres were consulted: - Fictional and semi-fictional literary accounts (primarily	- All reading culminated in an enriched and in-depth understanding of all aspects of coal mining, both regionally and nationally.

			<p>how coal mining has thus far been written about both in literature and in extant historical, sociological, and anthropological studies.</p>	<p>in the form of novels and poetry);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Non-fictional poetry (often produced by ex-coal miners); - Memoirs; - Factual/statistical studies of national and regional coal production; - Geographical and mineralogical studies; - Medical studies of coal mining related illnesses and diseases; - Historical studies of the history of coal mining, both nationally and regionally; - Sociological/anthropological studies of mining communities; - Non-fictional oral history, life history, and local history accounts. <p>In addition to this, I also studied how coal mining has been depicted in art, television, and film.</p>	
4	October – December 2012.	Archival work at the Magic Attic Archives, Swadlincote.	To research the history of coal mining in South Derbyshire as thoroughly as possible and to draw on the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Analysis of archival material pertaining to the history and heritage of the area’s coal mining industry (including the analysis and 	- Using Church Gresley’s 1861 census records, I created a tabulation of how many individuals living in Church Gresley at the time were employed by the local coal mining industry. I later compared this data to the postcode data I was supplied by Daw Mill colliery;

			expertise of local archivists (many of whom are retired coal miners).	collating of census data, colliery employment records, colliery accident and death records, visual material such as photographs and maps of local collieries, and local newspaper articles about South Derbyshire collieries); - Photocopying of relevant material; - Informal discussions with archive staff and users.	- I gained privileged access to locally produced literature on coal mining. Specifically, the work of Beryl Greening ¹⁰³⁰ and Atkins, et al, ¹⁰³¹ - I took copies of approx. 20 relevant historical photographs and maps of coal mining in South Derbyshire now owned by the Magic Attic Archives; - I did not record the informal discussions I had with the staff or users at the archives, but I did find their knowledge and advice invaluable and made notes of any relevant information.
5	October – December 2012.	Genealogical research into my personal family history and connection to coal mining and South Derbyshire.	To accurately trace my family’s connection to both coal mining and South Derbyshire so as to be transparent about my personal connection to my research and to position myself in my research as clearly as possible.	- Structured, formal interviews with three elderly family members (including photo-elicitation questions utilising photographs of the local area); - Use of census data, birth and death records, and marriage license records to trace my family’s connection to both South Derbyshire and coal mining. To do this I used a well-known genealogical research website.	- The interviews with my elderly family members resulted in rich oral history/life story/local history accounts of my family’s connection to both coal mining and South Derbyshire. They also resulted in the acquisition of numerous family photographs relating to both South Derbyshire and coal mining; - Focusing on my father’s side of the family, I was able to construct a family tree that successfully traced six consecutive generations of men who have worked in the area’s coal mining industry, as well as establishing that the entirety of my paternal family has lived in South Derbyshire for at least 300 years. To better understand this data, I produced both regular and pedigree family trees.

¹⁰³⁰ Greening, *A Short History of “The Streets” in Castle Gresley, Derbyshire*, “A Study of the South Derbyshire Coalfield.”

¹⁰³¹ Atkins, McCulloch, and Woolgrove, *The South Derbyshire Miners Lock-Out 1867-1868*.

	November 2012.	Field visit to Snibston Discovery Museum and Country Park (which hosts original colliery buildings and headstocks, a guided tour of their on-site working coal mine, and a mining themed play area).	To further research coal mining in the Midlands.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A guided tour of the on-site drift mine (the guides of which are also local ex-coal miners); - A ride on the on-site colliery locomotive; - A tour of the museum’s galleries and exhibition rooms; - The appreciation and photographing of relevant materials on display (for example, historical and contemporary mining tools); - A self-guided tour of the outdoor headstocks and mining themed play area; - Sensory ethnography techniques were employed during all of the above. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I took approx. 50 photographs of the various areas of the museum and park. Again, I was unable to take photographs when on the guided tour of the drift mine; - I did not record my discussions with staff members, but I made notes once home; - Again, the wearing of relevant safety equipment and the underground tour provided me with an opportunity to experience (as much as possible) what it is like to work in a coal mine and to witness a coal miner in his “natural surroundings”; - Whilst the colliery locomotive ride is primarily aimed at children, it gave me an opportunity to view the entirety of the site and to observe the outdoor features, such as the headstocks.
6	November 2012.	First contact with coal miners living in South Derbyshire already known to me.	The initial purpose of this stage was to make contact with key informants and gatekeepers, to gain access to other coal miners and request feedback on the goals of my research, and to pilot the surveys and questionnaires that I would use later during	How I contacted these coal miners varied depending on what technology I knew each person used, for example, telephone calls, text messages, Facebook messages, and emailing. Upon first contact, each coal miner was given detailed information about the goals of my research and were asked if they were willing to participate. If they agreed, I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ten coal miners were initially approached to act as pilots for the following questionnaires: A, B1, and N. Of these ten, seven coal miners responded. This resulted in the following data: seven individual histories of employment in the coal mining industry and distances commuted to work, 23 oral histories/life stories about being a coal miner, and seven personal accounts of progression in the coal mining industry; - I also asked these initial ten coal miners whether they would like to participate in the CBS programme, to which two agreed.

			my fieldwork at Daw Mill colliery.	then arranged the delivery of three questionnaires (A, B1, and N) and relevant consent forms, as well as the dates upon which they would return their completed documents.	
7	November – December 2012.	Cartographic research.	To establish an in-depth understanding of the geographical boundaries relating to my research. This included researching the historic and contemporary county boundaries and coalfield boundaries of South Derbyshire. In addition to this, I also sought to acquire knowledge of the geographical faults that divided coalfields, the underground layout of relevant collieries, and the location of mineralogical deposits in relevant collieries.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I requested access to relevant archival maps stored in the University of Sheffield’s map stores; - I researched relevant maps both online and in published literature; - I acquired and endeavoured to understand colliery maps that detailed both the underground layout of a colliery and the locations of mineralogical deposits and geographical faults. I acquired access to such maps via the Magic Attic Archives, the archives organised by SDMPG, and ex-coal miners. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I created the following two hand-drawn maps: 1. a geographical map detailing the towns and villages that form the South Derbyshire coalfield; and, 2. an approximation of where all the collieries in South Derbyshire have been located; - Four coal miners provided me with copies of various maps they have personally accumulated over the years, with the most significant being a series of underground maps of Daw Mill colliery.
8	November 2012 – February 2013.	First contact with UK Coal and Daw Mill colliery.	To gain consent for conducting qualitative research on-site at Daw Mill colliery and	- First contact was made via telephone and then subsequent conversations were had via email;	- Contact with UK Coal and Daw Mill colliery resulted in my gaining consent to come to Daw Mill colliery to conduct further ethnographic research, as well as the acquisition of statistical data in the form of the

			to acquire any data they would be willing to share will me.		postcodes of all employees at the colliery (it was this data that I used to contrast with the census data retrieved from the Magic Attic Archives).
9 (PIVOTAL DATE ★)	February – March 2013. PIVOTAL DATE: 22ND FEBRUARY 2013 (DAW MILL COLLIERY FIRE)	Further contact with UK Coal following the closure of Daw Mill colliery and numerous attempts at contacting Thorseby colliery.	To thank Daw Mill colliery for their assistance at the beginning of my research and to request whether my research could continue at Thorseby colliery.	- Contact was made via email and telephone.	- After trying on multiple occasions via both telephone and email I never received a response from Thorseby colliery and as the only remaining collieries were in the north of Yorkshire it became evident that I would no longer be able to pursue my initial plan to conduct both ethnographic research and the CBS sessions on-site at a modern colliery.
10	February – March 2013.	Outreach for data from members of the South Derbyshire public.	As my initial plans to collect the majority of my oral history/life history data from coal miners at Daw Mill colliery was unexpectedly ruined, I chose to attempt to collect such data from the general public.	- I placed advertisements for oral histories/life stories/ local histories about being a coal miner in South Derbyshire in the following newspapers, magazines, locations, and online facilities: the Burton Mail, the Three Views News magazine, the William Allitt School’s magazine the Phoenix, at the Magic Attic Archives and Sharpe’s Pottery Museum, and on the “Donisthorpe Colliery including other local pits” ¹⁰³² and “Dexter and	- Despite reaching thousands of people, this outreach for data from members of the public unfortunately resulted in no data. Whilst a number of children from the William Allitt School approached me to inform me that they had male relatives who were once coal miners (mainly grandfathers), and despite my encouraging them to get such relatives to complete the questionnaires, no such data was received; - Many of the members of the two Facebook groups, as well as the group moderators, were encouraging about my research and granted me permission to utilise information posted on the site, the vast majority of which is photographs, film footage, and nostalgic appeals.

¹⁰³² The description of which is as follows: “For all ex South Derbyshire & North West Leicestershire Colliery workers and friends. Including photos of Cadley Hill, Rawdon, Oakthorpe, Measham, Walton Way & any other local pits. All welcome.”

				Daw Mill Collieries” ¹⁰³³ Facebook groups; - I distributed an oral history/life history/local history questionnaire (form B2) to approx. 1000 students at the William Allitt School during their school assemblies for them to give to relevant relatives. A clearly marked letterbox was then left at the school’s reception for a month so that any completed questionnaires could be anonymously deposited.	
11	March 2013 – October 2014.	Sustained contact with coal miners living in South Derbyshire already known to me.	Owing to Daw Mill colliery’s closure, it became necessary for me to alter my research strategy. I therefore re-approached the coal miners that I contacted at the beginning of my research to request whether they would like to become more prominent informants in my ethnographic	As I sought to gather a “thick” description of life as a contemporary South Derbyshire coal miner, I endeavoured to employ multiple methods so as to ensure the data I collected was as comprehensive and holistic as possible. I therefore utilised the following data collection methods: - A variety of structured and semi-structured surveys and questionnaires;	- The seven new coal miners also supplied a number of oral history stories about being coal miners via form B1. This resulted in the submission of a further 16 short stories and one highly detailed 16-page memoir; - I made copious notes on the innumerable informal interviews/discussions had with all fourteen coal miners. These discussions took place at various locations, including my home, their homes, or local meeting places, such as the sites of old collieries; - I took approx. 25 photographs of the various coal mining objects that I discovered were on display in the homes of the initial seven coal miners (objects such as flame safety lamps, commemorative plates, and coal mining related decorative objects);

¹⁰³³ The description of which is as follows: “Dexter & Daw Mill Collieries Reunion page post any photos and memories about you time in mining.”

			<p>research and whether they would be willing to participate in the most important part of my research, the CBS programme. The same seven coal miners that I initially contacted continued to contribute to my ethnographic research. A further seven different coal miners then contacted me either via email, telephone, or Facebook to offer to participate in my project. Three of the new seven I did not know. These coal miners approached me as they had heard via “word of mouth” about my research. I therefore had fourteen key informants. Of these fourteen, five also agreed to participate in the CBS sessions. This sample size was the largest available to</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Informal interviews/discussions; - Visual ethnography of coal mining materials/objects/tools owned by and/or displayed by the coal miners in their homes (thus employing techniques found in the fields of material culture studies and visual ethnography); - The creation of a photographic essay detailing the trauma of involuntary redundancy for coal miners; - A psychogeographical walk with two coal miners (one ex and one retired) who are father and son around the new Canal Basin nature walk that was once Rawdon colliery. Both of these men had worked at Rawdon colliery. This also included the use of visual ethnography techniques; - The investigation into the significance of and inspiration for one of the coal miners’ St Barbara (the patron saint of coal mining) tattoo; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Upon the closure of Daw Mill colliery, two of the fourteen coal miners took photographs of their final moments at the colliery. Together, the three of us then collaboratively composed these images (along with a series of statements regarding the coal miners’ feelings about the colliery’s sudden closure) into a photographic essay; - I took approx. 25 photographs during the psychogeographical walk with the two coal miners, as well as making numerous notes once home; - Over the course of my ethnographic work I made innumerable and consistent reflections in my field journal; - During the formal interview with the coal miner who had the St Barbara tattoo I photographed his tattoo and afterwards further researched the significance of St Barbara for coal miners. This aspect of my research also led to a series of detailed discussions with the coal miners participating in my study that were employed at Daw Mill colliery about the Polish contract workers that were employed by the colliery shortly before its closure. It was explained to me that it was the Polish coal miners (all of whom were Catholic) that brought St Barbara to the attention of the British coal miners and that it was the symbol of St Barbara that united the two sets of coal miners who were, up until this point, finding the cultural differences between them hard to negotiate.
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			me and is representative of all remaining coal miners in Britain.	- The employment of sensory ethnography techniques when conducting all of the above.	
12	March 2013 – June 2013.	Weekly visits to the SDMPG’s HQ and museum.	To further research the history and culture of South Derbyshire’s coal mining industry, to draw on the expert knowledge of the SDMPG’s volunteers, to formally and informally interview the volunteers, and to imbibe the culture and heritage of coal mining.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Informal interviews and discussions; - Copious note-taking; - Multiple guided tours of the museum’s artefacts and archival material; - The photographing of museum artefacts; - Formal interviews; - Archival research; - Observing the group’s preparation for installing a permanent coal mining exhibition at Conkers Discovery Park, Swadlincote; - The employment of sensory ethnography techniques (primarily via eating and drinking with the volunteers, as well as drawing on my senses when in the archives). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I made innumerable notes in my field journal on the conversations had and knowledge gleaned; - The audio-recording of four formal interviews with retired coal miners. These interviews were not in fact conducted by me, as I serendipitously started working with the SDMPG at a time when they were producing a video to go alongside their new exhibition at Conkers. The interviews had therefore already been arranged. They were conducted by Hannah Moore (a freelance journalist) and were produced and directed by John Moore (a freelance producer). I was given permission to not only sit in on these interviews, but to also record them and use them in my research. The final video, entitled “A Hard Life: But No Regrets,” can be found on their website: http://www.southderbyshiremining.co.uk/index.html. - I took approx. 50 photographs of the objects on display in their museum; - The consumption of vast quantities of tea and biscuits.
13	March - April 2013.	Extended research into the local significance of public coal mining memorials via contact with sculptor Ray	To find out more about the sculpture’s origins (for example, how and why it was commissioned, and how and why it was designed), its	- I contacted Ray Lonsdale via email requesting whether he would be able to produce a short oral statement.	- Ray completed form B3 and submitted a detailed statement about why he made the statue and his personal connection to the coal mining industry.

		Lonsdale – the artist that created the “Don’t Worry, Son” coal mining memorial statue in Swadlincote. This statue was unveiled in 2011 by Arthur Scargill.	significance in/to the local area and local people, and whether it has been influenced by the artist having a personal connection to coal mining.		
14	March - April 2013.	Investigation into the local significance of the large coal mining mural inside the Morrisons supermarket, Swadlincote.	To assess the local significance of the coal mining mural at the Swadlincote branch of Morrisons.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Email and telephone contact with Morrisons supermarket; - Email contact with the mural’s creator, Graeme Wilson; - Structured single-answer street survey of people shopping at or passing by the supermarket. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - After speaking to at least six different Morrisons representatives, I was unable to determine who was in charge of commissioning the mural or why it was commissioned. No-one was actually sure as to who it was that was responsible for the commissioning of the mural or the reasons why Morrisons choose to do decorate their stores with such artwork (as they have similar murals in other stores located in other once industrial areas of the UK); - I further investigated the mural’s commissioning by examining its media coverage and found that Graeme Willson’s work for Morrisons stems from his passion for producing murals and artwork that depict the industrial heritage of Britain; - Despite multiple emails, I unfortunately received no response from the artist; - I conducted the survey over one weekend in April 2013 and stayed in the same spot between Morrisons and Swadlincote High Street on both the Saturday and Sunday until I reached 25 contributions each day.
15	April – July 2013.	Investigation into the local significance of the coal mining	To assess the local significance of the coal mining stained glass window that resides in	- Email contact with the artist that designed and installed the window;	- The artist was unfortunately unable to remember this window and could provide no information about its commissioning or design;

		stained glass window in St George and St Mary's Church, Church Gresley, Swadlincote.	St George and St Mary's Church. This further developed my understanding of the impact that industries such as coal mining have upon the development of local identity and heritage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Email contact with the local dioceses requesting the history of the window; - Email and telephone contact with the local branches of both the UDM and the NUM requesting the history of the window; - Secondary literature research; - A structured questionnaire given to the church's vicar and regular congregation (form K1); - A structured photo-elicitation questionnaire given to a number of ex and retired coal miners (form K2). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The local dioceses was only able to provide me with information about when the window was installed and that that the installation was something to do with the NUM; - My local UDM office had no information about the window; - My local NUM office could find little information about the window, although they confirmed that they did commission it. They also had a receipt for the celebratory meal that was held after it's unveiling at Gresley Old Hall and informed me that Edwina Curry (the area's MP at the time) attended the event; - St George and St Mary's vicar was able to provide me with the church's self-produced booklet, which detailed its history. However, this only contained a photograph of the window and the fact that it was installed in 1990 by the NUM; - In terms of the structured questionnaire, I received 22 responses from the congregation; - All fourteen of the coal miners directly contributing to my ethnographic research were again approached to complete the K2 form, however, only three responded.
★	June 2013.	Field visit to Apedale Heritage Centre's coal mining gala (including a visit to their coal mining museum and a guided underground tour of their on-site	To continue my research into the history and culture of coal mining in Britain.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Informal discussions with the heritage centre's staff, the ex-coal miners conducting the underground tours, the many stall holders at the gala, and those attending the gala; - The wearing of necessary safety equipment when on the underground tour; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - When talking with the stall holders I made important connections with the following organisations or people: the Miners Lamp Society, the Mines Rescue Service, and the industrial photographer Richard Howle. All of which expressed interest in being involved in my research; - Howle later sent me photographs of derelict collieries and completed form B3 (via the submission of a detailed account of his connection to coal mining and why he has chosen to capture the industry via photography); - I took approx. 60 photographs of all aspects of the centre and gala (except the underground tour);

		working drift mine).		- The use of sensory ethnography and visual ethnography techniques.	- Another experience of wearing the necessary safety equipment and going down the mine again enhanced my understanding of what it is like to be a coal miner; - I made detailed notes on the day once home.
16	June – July 2013.	Initial contact with South Derbyshire branch of the Mines Rescue Service.	To gather further ethnographic data about coal mining culture and to form a second CBS group comprising of Mines Rescue Service staff members.	- First contact was made via an informal discussion with representatives of the Mines Rescue Service at the Apedale coal mining gala; - This was followed by more formal telephone and email conversations. It was at this point that it was agreed that I would be able to interview staff members about their careers as coal miners and that these men would form a second CBS group. It was also agreed that both the interviews and the CBS sessions would be conducted on-site at their headquarters; - This was followed by a formal meeting with key staff members. Here we began to organise when the interviews and CBS sessions would take place. However, shortly after this meeting I was informed that they	- Despite the Mines Rescue Service being unable to contribute to my project, one member did still wish to contribute to the CBS programme, as well as its design - Mr Blue.

				were no longer able to contribute to my project.	
★	July 2013.	Field visit to the SDMPG permanent exhibit at Conkers.	To further research the history of coal mining in South Derbyshire and to see the SDMPG’s archival material in an official exhibition.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Self-guided tour of exhibit; - Viewing and photographing of artefacts and artwork; - Watching of the SDMPG’s video. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I took approx. 60 photographs of the objects, tools, photographs, maps, and artwork on display; - Although I was present at the recording of the interviews featured on the SDMPG’s video for the exhibition, I watched the final product and made further notes.
17	October 2013 – February 2014.	Participation in the University of Sheffield’s <i>Image Speaks</i> public engagement project (organised by David Forrest, Amy Ryall, and photographer Andy Brown).	I utilised the opportunity to participate in this public engagement project to continue my ethnographic research. The purpose of this project was to create a single image that represented my entire PhD research. This image would then go on public display.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Visual ethnography (both in the form of creating a visual image and analysing the visual imagery of the colliery visited); - Pyschogeography/walking ethnography; - Sensory ethnography; - Informal discussions (in the form of oral/life/local histories). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I sought to capture the ethnographic and CBS sides of my PhD by creating a visualisation of the coal miners’ contextual reading of Jeremiah 18:1-12. This consisted of myself, a photographer (Andy Brown), and three of the coal miners participating in the CBS sessions visiting the site of a former colliery in South Derbyshire. We visited the site of Oakthorpe colliery, which has now been transformed into a public walk and picnic area. Together, we created two images, one a photograph of the men at the site, and one a sample of the coal miners’ reading of Jeremiah 18:1-12; - Whilst walking to the site and constructing the photograph I was able to informally talk with the coal miners about the history of the site and their feelings about its very visual transformation.

APPENDIX 9. SAMPLE OF THE DATA TABULATED FROM CHURCH GRESLEY’S 1861
 CENSUS RECORDS

Name:	Street:	Job Title:
Alexander White	Coppice Side	Coal Miner
Thomas Stones	Coppice Side	Coal miner
John Stones	Coppice Side	Coal miner
George Clamp	Coppice Side	Coal miner
John Davis	Coppice Side	Coal miner
George Beard	Coppice Side	Coal miner
James Davis	Coppice Side	Coal miner
John Davis	Coppice Side	Employed at colliery
Job Sherrard	Coppice Side	Coal miner
Thomas Grice	Coppice Side	Coal miner
William Brewin	Coppice Side	Employed at colliery
John Brewin	Coppice Side	Employed at colliery
Henry Gooderich	Coppice Side	Coal miner
Joseph Callice	Coppice Side	Colliery labourer
John Troupe	Coppice Side	Coal miner
John Riddle	Coppice Side	Coal miner
Richard Mellorday	Coppice Side	Coal miner
Luke Mellorday	Coppice Side	Coal miner
John Mellorday	Coppice Side	Employed at colliery
George Hart	Coppice Side	Coal miner
James Troupe	Coppice Side	Coal miner
William Clamp	Coppice Side	Employed at colliery
Daniel Kirk	Coppice Side	Coal miner
John Kirk	Coppice Side	Coal miner
Joseph Kirk	Coppice Side	Employed at colliery
William Kirk	Coppice Side	Coal miner
Hugh Kirk	Coppice Side	Coal miner
Henry Bloor	Coppice Side	Coal miner
George Moore	Coppice Side	Coal miner
James Hill	Coppice Side	Coal higgler
David Badkin	Coppice Side	Coal miner
Francis Mear	Coppice Side	Coal miner
James Mear	Coppice Side	Coal miner
Edward Mee	Coppice Side	Coal higgler

APPENDIX 10. POSTCODE DATA RETRIEVED FROM DAW MILL COLLIERY

Miles travelled to work and number of coal miners travelling this distance:

Miles travelled to work:	Number of coal miners:
0-5	38
6-10	156
11-15	32
16-20	11
21-25	44
26-30	39
31-35	6
36-40	1
41-45	8
46-50	14
51-60	94
61-70	56
71-80	13
81-90	8
91-100	4
101-200	0
201-300	4

Mean, mode, and median of miles travelled to work and time taken to complete commute:

MOST COMMON:	
MODE of miles	6.6
MODE of times	21 minutes
AVERAGES:	
MEAN of miles	32.87
MEAN of times	1 hour 9 minutes
MIDDLE VALUES	
MEDIAN of miles	24.1
MEDIAN of times	46 minutes

Closest employee:	1.6 miles	6 minutes
Furthest away employee:	228 miles	4 hours 28 minutes

Additional statistics:

- Of the 528 coal miners, 349 (66%) lived under 50 miles away from their employing colliery, whereas 179 (34%) lived 51 miles or over from their place of work;
- Only 58 of the 528 coal miners lived on the same street as another coal miner;
- Of those 58, 52 have only one other coal miner on their street, and 6 have two other coal miners on their street (however, as I only received postcode data, it may be that the coal miners may live in the same house as another coal miner, for example, father and son, rather than just the same street).
- 470 coal miners are therefore the only coal miner on their street.

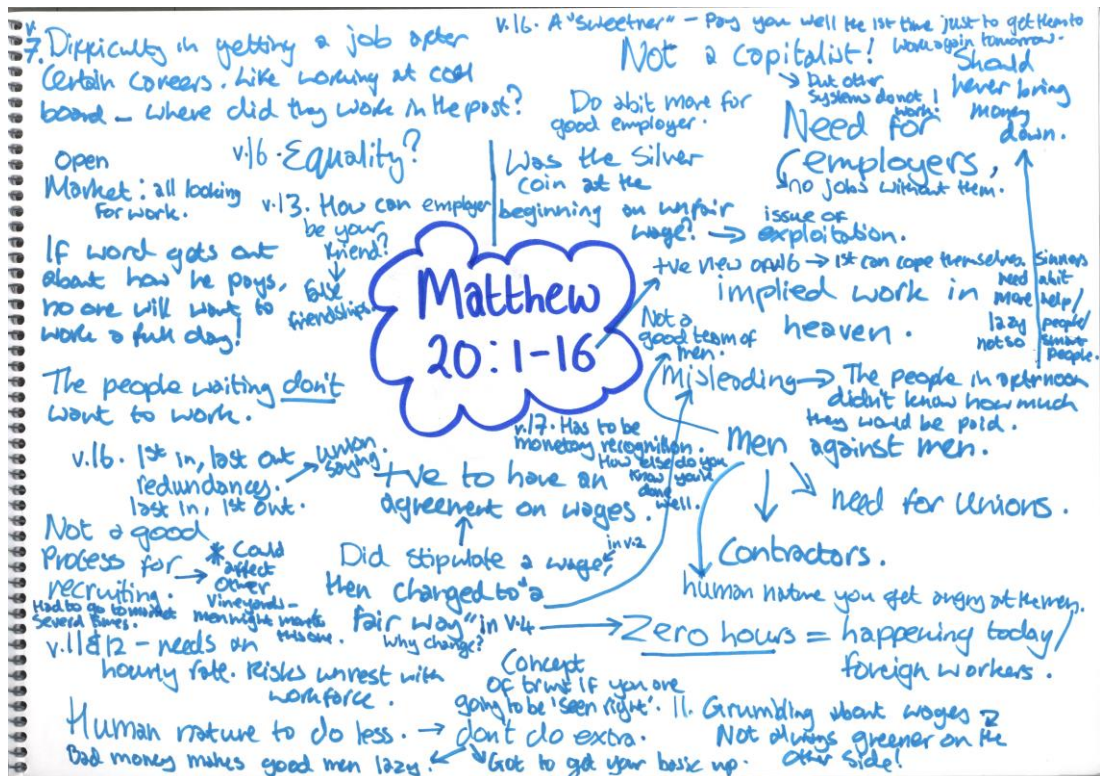
APPENDIX 11. COMMUTING QUESTIONNAIRE

Name :	Collieries employed at:	Name of village/town lived in during employment :	Dates employed :	Transportation to work:	Did you live within a “sociable distance” from any work colleagues ?
Mr A	Rawdon Asfordby Daw Mill	Newhall Newhall Newhall	1982-1989 1989-1997 1997- 2012+	Motorbike Car Car	Yes Yes No
Mr B	Rawdon	Blackfordby then Newhall	1954-1989	Bicycle or on foot	Yes
Mr C	Donisthorpe Asfordby Daw Mill	Castle Gresley Newhall Newhall	1978-1989 1989-1997 1997- present	Bicycle/bus/car Car Car	Yes Yes Some, yes
Mr D	Rawdon Leahall Asfordby	Swadlincote Swadlincote Swadlincote	1978-1989 1989-1990 1990-1997	Motorbike/car Car Car	Yes No Yes
Mr E	Measham Cadley Hill	Measham Measham	1973-1984 1984-1986	Work bus/lift Car	Yes No
Mr F	Daw Mill	Swadlincote	2008- present	Car	A few, yes
Mr G	Measham	Measham	1970-1977	Walking/bicycle	Yes

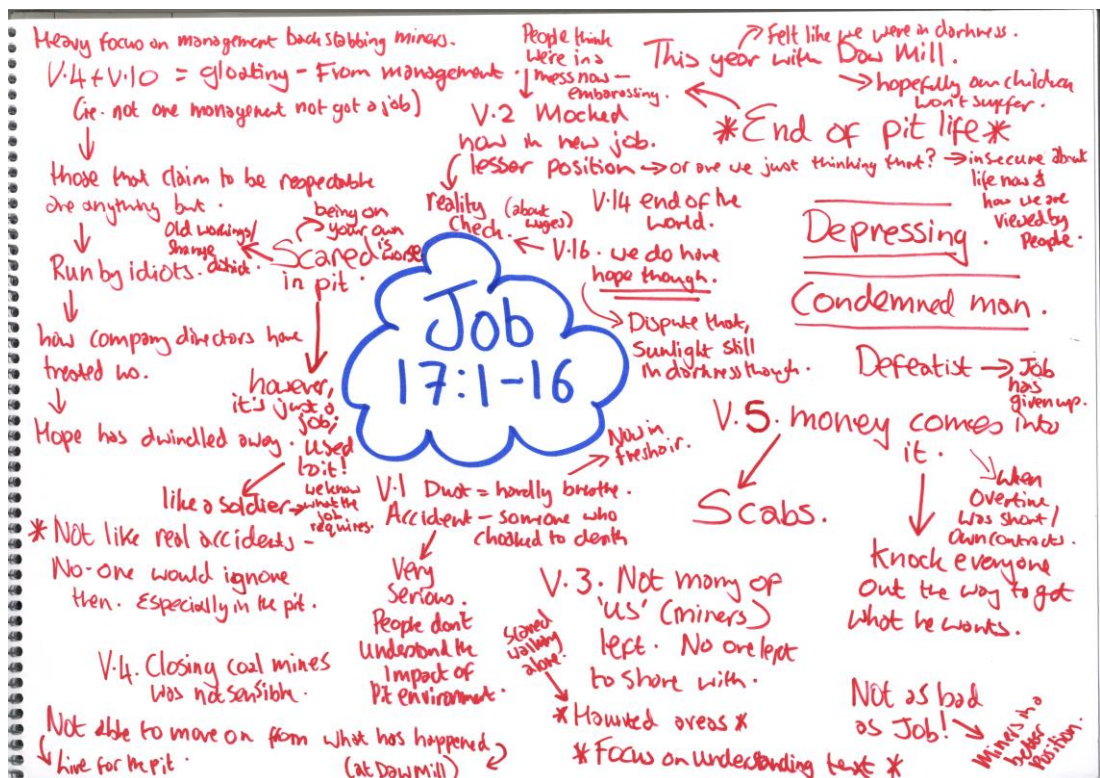
APPENDIX 12. EMPLOYMENT HISTORY QUESTIONNAIRE

1. How long have you worked in a coal mine?
2. How old were you when you started working in a coal mine?
3. What coal mines have you worked at?
4. What job titles have you held whilst being a coal miner?
5. Have you had any other jobs apart from being a coal miner? (Either before or after). If so, what were they?
6. Why did you leave coal mining?

	Mr Black	Mr Brown	Mr Purple	Mr Red	Mr Green
YOB	1959	1963	1957	1962	1962
1.	1975-1990 (15 years)	1982-2013 (31 years)	1976-2013 (37 years)	1978-2013 (35 years)	1978-2013 (35 years)
2.	16	19	18	16	16
3.	1. Donisthorpe (South Derbyshire).	1. Rawdon (South Derbyshire). 2. Donisthorpe (South Derbyshire). 3. Asfordby (Nottinghamshire). 4. Daw Mill (Warwickshire).	1. Measham Main (South Derbyshire). 2. Daw Mill (Warwickshire)	1. Donisthorpe (South Derbyshire). 2. Asfordby (Nottinghamshire). 3. Daw Mill (Warwickshire).	1. Cadley Hill (South Derbyshire). 2. Daw Mill (Warwickshire).
4.	Supply lad, face worker, man rider driver.	Belt driver, supply lad, header, face-man, deputy and stand in over-man.	Coal face worker.	Electrician, charge-man electrician.	Supply lad, header, face worker.
5.	Apprentice electrician (before). Mixer at chemical works, handyman, fuel analyst (all after).	Production apprentice at Pirelli LTD (before). Warehouse man (after).	Apprentice mechanic (before). NONE (after)	NONE (both before and after)	NONE (both before and after)
6.	Coal mine closed.	Colliery closed.	Made redundant.	Redundancy.	They didn't want us.



APPENDIX 14. EXEGETICAL MAP OF JOB 17:1-16 SESSION



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